



National History Museum

GUIDE

Consultants:
Professor Georgi Georgiev,
Professor Velizar Velkov, Dimiter Ovcharov,
Senior Research Associate; Velichka Koicheva,
Senior Research Associate
Bulgarian-language editors: Evgenia Yaneva,
Margarita Moutafchieva,
Translated by Nedyalka Chakalova,
Vassil Atanasov, Antonia Parcheva,
Neli Dragneva
English-language editor: Pauline Pirinska
Artist: Zheko Alexiev
Photos: Vladimir Vitanov
Art editor: Kuncho Kunev
Technical editor: Magardich Moralyan
Proofreader: Evdokia Krapcheva
Format 60 × 84/24 Printers' sheets 17
Index 13/95314-63122/0602-9-86
Svyat Publishers, Sofia
Balkan State Publishing House, Sofia
Printed in Bulgaria
Price: 4,81 leva



AUTHORS:

Ivan Venedikov, Senior Research Associate
Violeta Dimova, Senior Research Associate
Maria Yossifova, Research Associate
Leonora Boneva

EDITORS:

Professor Simeon Damyanov, Dr Sc
Ivan Draev, Senior Research Associate

National History Museum

Svyat Publishers
Sofia, 1985

Welcome to the National History Museum

The National History Museum is the largest museum in the People's Republic of Bulgaria. It was founded on April 1, 1973 with the purpose of tracing, collecting, studying, publishing and exhibiting documents and artifacts related to the history of the Bulgarian people.

In addition to the organization and setting up of the museum, other basic functions had to be developed. The exhibits had to be collected together (they already number about 200,000). Exhibitions in Bulgaria and abroad had to be organized (about 30 such exhibitions have already been put together — *1000 Years of Bulgarian Icons, Medieval Bulgarian Civilization, Prehistoric Culture in the Bulgarian Lands*, etc.). Then came research and publications (archaeological excavations, general and specialized expeditions and relevant publications). The aim was to spread information about Bulgaria's cultural and historic heritage.

Over a period of ten years the main task of the staff of the National History Museum was to set up an exhibition of the 1,300 anniversary of the founding of the Bulgarian state. This exhibition is the result of the combined efforts of the Bulgarian Museum Association, general public and eminent scholars — historians, art specialists, archaeologists, ethnographers, artists, architects, etc. Lyudmila Zhivkova, a Bulgarian who shall always be remembered, devoted herself to this patriotic cause.

The National History Museum was officially opened on March 2, 1984 by Mr. Todor Zhivkov, Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and President of the State Council of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. In his speech at the opening of this important cultural institution he defined it as "a new and important addition to our socialist culture and to our museum work which demonstrates the Bulgarian Communist Party's care and consistency in the

implementation of the April policy in the field of culture". The National History Museum is housed in the stately building of the old Law Courts which stands in the historical centre of Sofia, on the site of ancient Serdica which is now the nucleus of the social-political and cultural life of Bulgaria and its capital.

This building was designed by the well-known Bulgarian architect Koichev and was built from 1928 to 1936. Great care was taken while it was renovated as a museum to preserve its salient features so that visitors can still appreciate the grandeur of this impressive piece of architecture.

The first stage in the setting up of the museum has already been completed. The 5,600 exhibits are arranged on two floors and take up a total area of 10,000 sq m.

Among them are unique works of art dating from ancient times to the Liberation from Ottoman Rule; from the times of the Thracians, the Bulgarians and the Slavs, the Medieval Bulgarian State, the turbulent age of the National Revival and the Russo-Turkish War of Liberation 1877-1878.

At the National History Museum visitors can admire stone and metal tools, wonderful objets d'art in gold and wood, Bulgarian paintings and sculptures, icons, woodcarvings and important manuscripts. They all are a source of just patriotic pride and of aesthetic pleasure.

They inspire the Bulgarian people to work for the development of their socialist country. The exhibition shows that the Bulgarian lands have always been inhabited by vital, hard-working and gifted people of unbending spirit.

We hope that you will enjoy your visit to this great temple of the Bulgarian cultural and historic heritage.



The Bulgarian Lands in Ancient Times

The Prehistoric Age

Ancient Thrace

The anteroom and the central hall of the National History Museum have been used to display objects from ancient and medieval times found on the territory of Bulgaria. These objects show that the Bulgarian lands were the crossroads of different civilizations. (1).

At the centre of the anteroom there is a group of stone statues dating back to the time of Roman rule in Thrace. Among them is the exquisite white marble statue of the goddess Artemis, discovered near Silistra (probably 2nd century AD). Artemis is dressed in a long chiton and depicted in brisk forward movement. An interesting stele from Sandanski, evidently produced by some enterprising local artists, probably dates back to the same period. The upper part of the slab shows the relief of a rider depicted in motion. The lower part consists of four portraits, arranged in a row, featuring the members of a family.

To the right of this group, next to the northern staircase, right in the centre is a pediment from a small temple from Serdica (now Sofia) dedicated to Zeus. On its triangular surface there is an inscription which shows that the deity bore the names Capitoline Zeus — Helios — Serapis. The epithet Capitoline was given after Capitoline Hill in Rome; however, according to the beliefs of the time, Jupiter who was the Roman equivalent of Zeus, was also identified with the Egyptian deity Serapis, who in his turn, was considered to be God of the Sun, hence he was also called Helios. This is a typical example of religious syncretism, i.e. the merging of different deities into one.

The pediment was made, together with the entire temple, by the ruler of the province of Thrace Apis Claudius Marcialus (161-163 AD). The capitals decorated with acanthus leaves of the Corinthian type which are displayed around the pediment should also be mentioned. They are different to the Ionic capitals which have simpler decorations and are displayed to the left of the central group, close to the southern staircase. Here, in the centre of the portal which links the anteroom with the central hall, is the famous icon of St Theodor dating from the late 9th century (see Medieval monuments in the central hall further below, 41).

The central-hall display includes a great many stone exhibits from Ancient Thrace, dating back to the period of Roman rule from the 1st to the 4th century AD. These are almost exclusively statues and reliefs which used to be placed over the graves of wealthy citizens, and which have been found in various parts of the country. They illustrate Roman provincial art of that time. The centrepiece consists of the fragments of a statue of the Roman Emperor Traianus, found in the village of Maluk Preslavets, Silistra district. Emperor Traianus is depicted as the victor in the war with Dacia (now Romania). The statue was erected c.107 AD and shows the Emperor in richly decorated armour. On his chest, below an eagle holding a thunderbolt in its talons — a Roman military symbol



2. Anthropomorphic vessel, clay, village of Gradeshnitsa, Vratsa district, Neolithic, height 25.5 cm

— there are two Victorias (figures of the goddess of victory) offering wreaths to a statue of Athena (Palladion). The group is ringed on three sides with a wreath of vine twigs originating from an acanthus ornament. Palladion is standing on the calyx of the acanthus. Although the ornamentation of the armour is seen on many other statues of emperors of that time, the artist has shown considerable originality in making the wreath, which is not found on other monuments. The nodes of the twigs making up the wreath, from which the vine sprouts start, are in the shape of calices. This style indicates the work of a local artist from some large bronze-casting workshop in Thrace. The statue was huge — about 3.2 m high. Similar statues are rare in Roman sculpture (39).

Another statue, which has not survived intact either, is that of Emperor Gordian III (235-238 AD). The bronze head was found in the village of Nikyup, Veliko Turnovo district (the ancient Nicopolis ad Istrum). This emperor came to power as a young boy and the local artist managed to convey the youthful expression on his face with great skill: the hair was chiselled after the head had been cast, as was the practice in stone sculpture.

The mosaic from the large villa near Armira, Ivailovgrad region, is another attractive exhibit in the central hall. It is the earliest, dating from the mid-2nd century AD, and is one of the best examples discovered in this country. It is divided into small quadrangular sections, each of them decorated with a different scene. One side of the mosaic portrays the owner's head, flanked by the pictures of his two children, a boy and a girl, depicted naked and in full length. On each side of these pictures there is a scene set in rectangular frames. Only one of these scenes has been completely preserved — Dionysos and Eros, the gods of love. From the other scene only the image of Pan, the god of nature and constant companion of Dionysos, has been preserved. The other pictures show other deities or demigods: a satyr carrying a kid on his shoulders, the winged goddess of Victory Nike (the Roman Victoria), Dionysos and finally Artemis, the goddess of hunting with a bow in her hand. Another frame presents yet another scene connected with Dionysos: Ariadne lying on the seashore, abandoned by Theseus. An Eros perched close to her suggests the forthcoming appearance of Dionysos. Two square frames, one below the other, show Aketon watching the bathing Artemis and Aketon's punishment for having seen the goddess naked. She turned him into a deer and he was attacked by his own dogs. On the other side of the same fragment there is a genre scene — a fishmonger.

Although the mosaic is badly damaged, the skill of the artist is obvious. He used only two colours of pebbles, but nevertheless managed to produce an exquisite line and, in spite of the small size of the pictures, his work is superior to that of many other artists of that time in the Bulgarian lands.

Four glass-cases separate the exhibits from Antiquity from the Medieval finds exhibited in the central hall. Two of the cases contain interesting Thracian finds. Case 1 contains the finds from Kazichané dating from the 8th-7th century BC, consisting of one clay vessel, one copper vessel and one gold vessel, found placed inside each other. The gold vessel has simple ornamentation and clumsy cannelures. It is an illustration of the crude work of local Thracian goldsmiths of that period.

Case 2 displays two of the most interesting finds from the Thracian tumulus in Vratsa, known as the Mogilanska Mogila. The finds are dated c.380-350 BC. One of these objects is the greaves from Vratsa, made of silver and decorated with the head of a goddess with a wreath on her hair, representing serpentlike monsters, with the heads of lions or gryphons, coming out of a snail's shell. The greaves belonged to a Thracian ruler who was buried in the tumulus, while the wreath was from the burial of his wife. The collection to which these exhibits belong is on display in Room 12, case 8.

One of the most remarkable finds of the 9th-10th century is displayed in the anteroom to the central hall. This is the ceramic icon of St Theodor, consisting of twenty painted and glazed tiles. The saint's stern and spiritual image radiates nobility and dignity. The icon possesses great individual expressiveness and is executed with great technical skill.



3. Sickle made of antler with flint teeth, Stara Zagora, Neolithic, length 26 cm

Seven rooms lead off from the central hall and contain displays of extremely rare and important large finds and treasures from different epochs.

The Chalcolithic Necropolis in Varna is on show in Room 1. During the Neolithic and Chalcolithic ages in the lands of present-day Bulgaria, between the 7th and 4th millennia BC, (the finds are displayed in Room 9), the dead were buried in hocker-position, i.e. they were bent, the arms bent at the elbows and the legs at the knees. The dead, therefore, entered the earth's womb in the same position as they had been in their mother's womb. Grave offerings, mostly clay vessels, were buried with the dead.

However, one necropolis discovered in Varna in 1972, which is still being investigated, revealed for the first time burials of a very different kind. This necropolis is from the middle of the 4th millennium BC. It contains skeletons lying in supine position, with outstretched limbs. It is interesting that in some of the graves there are no skeletons. Instead of a skeleton, they contain a modelled clay mask, not fired but sun-dried (4). The human face has ears perforated with numerous holes along their periphery, as did many models of idols made during those times. The nose is moulded in the middle of the face. Two elliptical gold plates mark the eyes. One oblong gold plate represents the mouth. Small gold nails arranged below the mouth with the tips pointing upward, represent the teeth. Gold rings are inserted in the holes of the ears and on the forehead there is an object resembling a tiara. It appears that this grave without a corpse (cenotaph) was made for some dead person whose body was not available to his relatives.

Sceptres which symbolized the power of the deceased were also found in some of the graves. The upper part ended in a hammer-axe, which according to the excavators of the necropolis, had not been used. In most of the graves the axes found were made of stone, though in some graves they were made of copper. They were put into the graves together with their wooden helms, on which gold rings were placed. However, gold was found not only on these peculiar sceptres. The clothes of some of the deceased were covered with gold ornaments made of thin plates in different shapes. Some of them resemble buttons representing part of a sphere, others are twisted like snakes, and there are also three images of animals with horns. In some female burials gold ornaments were also discovered: bracelets and necklaces (5).

Gold objects have not been discovered in all the graves of the necropolis, 240 so far. Most of them were found in four of the graves.

The weight of the gold is more than one kilogramme. Smaller numbers of gold objects were found in ten other graves. It is evident, however, that gold was owned by only a small fraction of the inhabitants of the settlement to which the Varna necropolis belonged. They were a group apart from the remaining dwellers of the same settlement and they even used pottery decorated not with paint but with gold. In accordance with tradition, they continued to be buried in the same places as the other inhabitants of the settlement. Types of hammer-axes emerged during the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC, which were clearly not intended for practical use, because either one edge or the other was replaced by a decorative motif. Such types of axes evidently represent the further development of Chalcolithic power insignia. The discovery of the Varna necropolis is of extreme importance. It represents a new page in the research into social relations during that remote epoch. The necropolis furnished the first evidence of the existence of royal power during that time and also revealed the oldest gold in the world, and in a place where no one expected it to be. The place was in fact the area between the Danube and the Eastern Balkan Mountains, well protected both from the north and from the south. And this was where the Bulgarian State emerged four and a half millennia later.

Gold ornaments from that time were also found in other places in the area, e.g. in Douran Koulak in Dobroudja. An isolated treasure of gold rings was found in the Chalcolithic settlement near the village of Hotnitsa, Veliko Turnovo district. These materials are also on display in the room, together with finds from the necropolis in Varna. All these gold finds are evidence of the unexpected and brilliant conclusion to the Chalcolithic

Age in North-eastern Bulgaria. They were the creation of a society that had outstripped even the most highly cultured peoples from the 4th millennium BC.

If Aeneolithic culture had continued to develop along the same lines, it would have developed into one of the greatest cultures of that epoch. However, one of the storms that often raged in the Bulgarian lands along the Danube — an area frequently invaded by migrating groups — swept away the achievements of the Chalcolithic dwellers of Eastern Bulgaria. The culture collapsed, and we do not know why: whether the barrier which this Chalcolithic kingdom represented was destroyed by invaders or by the blows of some social conflict. On the ruins of this culture there soon appeared the Early Bronze culture, which was much different and much poorer.

Cultural finds from the period between the 7th and the beginning of the 3rd millennium, to which the necropolis of Varna also belongs, are displayed in Rooms 1 and 2.

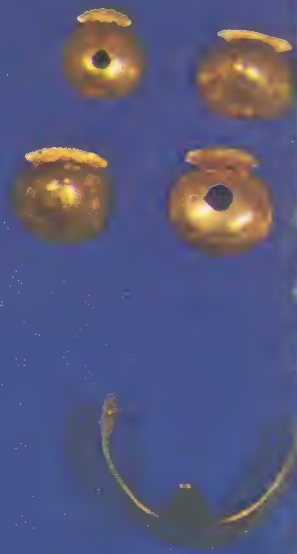
The Vulchitrun Gold Treasure is on show in Room 2. This is indisputably the largest and the oldest gold treasure found so far in Bulgaria. The treasure was discovered while vines were being planted near the village of Vulchitrun, Pleven district. It is made of pure, 22-carat gold. The treasure is dated to the 16th-12th century BC, i.e. the time of the legendary



4. Mask, clay, grave No.3, Aeneolithic necropolis, Varna, copy, height 23.5 cm

5. Grave offerings, gold, flint, bone, grave No. 36, Aeneolithic necropolis, Varna







Thracian kings Orpheus and Rhesus, and of the debarkation of the Achaean fleet in front of the walls of Troy on the southern shore of the Dardanelles.

The treasure consists of the following vessels: four kyathoses, one large vessel with two handles and the strangest object in the find — a trifoil vessel (10). Its three small basins have been connected to each other by means of the curved electron tubes which join them at the bottom. They have a common handle shaped like a trident, which is made of electron (gold and silver alloy). In addition to these vessels, the treasure also contains seven lids of various dimensions. The vessels which they covered were not hidden in the ground. Consequently, at the time when the treasure was in the home of the Thracian dynast who owned it, it must have been much larger.

The artists who made the vessels were very skilled metalworkers. They left most of the surface of the vessels plain and concentrated the ornamentation around the handles and mouth of the vessels. The decoration consists mainly of ribs separated by cannelures. The only exceptions are the basins of the trifoil vessel. They are covered with cannelures. Near the lids the cannelures are concentric, with spaces left between them in which there are concentric circles of pearl ornament. The bases of the vessels are decorated in the same way. Both the vessels and their lids are



made of separate elements, soldered together with silver. The handles are drawn down from the vessel's mouth and are soldered to the body of the vessel, also with silver. For greater strength they are secured by gold rivets which have flat heads at both ends (11).

The making of the vessels, however, was not only the smith's job. Even before the lids were forged, bronze bulbs were prepared for them and placed on the handle, as well as bronze arms which support the lower part of the lid in the middle. The central part of the arm contains an open-work cross inscribed in a disc. One small hole at the centre of the cross bears traces of amber filling. Consequently, the workshop which

6. Cult scene, clay, village of Ovcharovo, Turgovishté district, Aeneolithic, height of the dwelling 7.5 cm, copy

7. Face urn, clay, village of Hotnitsa, Veliko Turnovo district, Aeneolithic, height 15.2 cm

made the treasure used this delicate material, imported from faraway lands. At the points where the fork-shaped handles touch the basins of the trifoil vessel there are triangular holes filled with niello (a mixture of silver and sulphur). Finally, the decoration on the outside of the two largest lids is also peculiar. They are covered with silver ornaments, consisting of a band of thin silver foil, soldered to the gold and hammered in. The band is edged by small holes, made with an awl.

The artists who made these treasures were skilled in many toreutic techniques which are used to this day. Technically they were much better executed than other known silver and gold vessels produced at the same time in other countries, even when compared with the gold vessels from Greece from the contemporary Mycenaean age (1600-1200 BC). However, the shapes of the vessels in the Vulchitrun treasure and probably of other treasures as well which have not been found, were reproduced in the pottery found both in Greece and in present-day Bulgaria. They frequently occurred in Asia Minor, too. Only the trifoil vessel has no parallels and remains an enigma.

There can be no doubt that the treasure was the work of local Thracian artists. It is very different from treasures found in other countries.

The question as to what the vessels were used for also deserves attention. The large vessel which was found and the other vessels of which only the



lids remain, were obviously used for storing liquids, food, wine. The cups, however, with their high handles, were not convenient for drinking. They might have been used for transferring the wine from the large vessels to other vessels, most probably ordinary cups. All this suggests that the treasure was designed to be used at feasts — symposia — at which political and especially religious matters were discussed in those remote times. Orpheus, in his capacity of priest-king, gathered believers at such symposia. At similar feasts, Zalmoxis, who was King of the Thracians, preached faith in the immortality of the soul.

Everything so far suggests that the Vulchitrun treasure was intended for cult rituals. It probably remained in the home of the owner, the dynast, until the outbreak of some rebellion or war. Then the owner, or someone else, took part of the treasure — as much as could be conveniently carried because of its volume and weight — and fled, leaving the larger and heavier vessels behind. However, the danger which caused the treasure to be abandoned must have caught up with the fugitive, compelling him to leave what he was carrying and to bury it in the hope of retrieving it later. That he never did.

The monuments of the age which gave birth to the Panagyurishtë treasure are displayed in Room 10.

The Panagyurishtë treasure shown in Room 3 was discovered accidentally



by people digging up clay for bricks not far from the town of Panagyurishtë. It is a rare ancient find. The gold weights a total of 6.1 kg (26). At that time, vessels were rarely made of gold and this suggests that its owner must have been an extremely wealthy and powerful ruler. However, what is even more interesting is that the vessels which belong to it (nine altogether), were known mainly in the East, in Persia. Four of the vessels are rhyta, three of them identical in shape. One of the rhyta is in the shape of a stag's head and is decorated below the mouth with a scene depicting Paris' choosing the most beautiful of the three goddesses: Aphrodite, Athena and Hera. The second rhyton is of the same shape, but is decorated with the feats of two heroes: Heracles killing the Keryneian hind, and Theseus killing the Marathon bull. The third rhyton is in the shape of a ram's head. On its neck are depicted Dionysos and the nymph Eryope, each flanked by a Bacchant. The fourth rhyton is different in shape. The lower part is shaped like the protome of a goat with long curving horns, as found in Eastern art. In addition to these four rhyta, the treasure also contains three more, shaped like amazon heads. In two of the rhyta the amazon's hair is covered with a veil, in the third one she has a helmet decorated on both sides with large gryphons. These three rhyta have a handle at the top, shaped like a winged sphynx, whereas three of the other four rhyta have lions. All seven rhyta have a wide



8. Two-faced idol, clay, Stara Zagora mineral spas, Aeneolithic, height 41 cm

9. Mould for sceptre, stone, village of Pobit Kamuk, Razgrad district, Bronze Age, length 25 cm

mouth for pouring the wine and a small drinking hole below. When the person using the rhyton was not drinking, he would stop up the drinking hole with a finger.

In addition to the seven rhyta, the treasure also contains two other vessels which are the heaviest and most beautiful. The workmanship is superior to that of the other objects.

One of these vessels is a spherical amphora (27). The upper parts of the two handles are shaped like centaurs. The circumference of the body is covered by a scene taken from ancient mythology: *The Seven against Thebes*. The two sons of Oedipus, King of Thebes, argued as to who was to rule over the city. One of them was in the city and ruled over it, while the other one joined seven other kings and attacked Thebes. Thus the fight between Eteocles and Polyneikes ended with the death of the two brothers. Below this scene, which probably depicts the capture of the palace in Thebes, just below each handle, there is a lion's head with a drinking hole in the mouth. In this way two people could drink from the amphora at the same time, as was the custom during fraternization. The amphora was intended to be used for drinking when treaties were made and the scene depicted on it is relevant to such occasions, because Eteocles and Polyneikes had agreed that each would rule Thebes for a year at a time, but they failed to keep their agreement and died.

10



10. Trifoil vessel, gold, treasure from the village of Vulchitrun, Pleven district, 16th-12th century BC, length 23.9 cm

11. Treasure from the village of Vulchitrun, Pleven district, 16th-12th century BC, weight 12.5 gm

Around a rosette in the centre of the amphora's semi-spherical base there are two pictures on this theme. One of the images represents a Silenus, a mythological creature, playing a double flute. The two bodies of the flute produce harmonious music when there is accord and harmony between them. The other picture shows the child Herakles killing the two serpents sent by Hera to destroy him. Separated in his two hands, the two serpents died.

The ninth and last vessel of the treasure is a gold phial. It is decorated with three concentric circles of very realistic negro heads with a circle of acorns around the umbo in the centre. These are separated in their turn by concentric circles of lotus blossoms and palmettes. Such phials were common in Asia Minor and were first produced in Assyria. The almonds or hemispheres which were characteristic of Persian art are replaced here by the negro heads, realistically worked, a feature found in Greek art in the later part of the 4th century BC.

The rhyton itself is also an Eastern form, as is the amphora, which had the same function as the rhyton. The ram and deer heads, as well as the goat protome, are highly stylized, with folds around the eyes and nostrils. Although obviously decorative, an attempt was made to present the hair realistically. This suggests a mingling of Oriental and Greek elements.



11

The vessels' eastern character is most evident in the shape of the handles. The lion image in the three rhyta shaped like animal heads, the winged sphynx on the handle of the other three rhyta shaped like amazon heads, and the amphora with handles shaped like centaurs, are reminiscent of Persian vessels which had handles shaped like animals. They were placed on stands, just as Persian vessels were. Consequently, those artists were familiar with Persian art. However, the deities and heroes depicted around the mouths of the vessels in such accurate detail came from Greek religion and mythology. All this indicates that the artist who made the vessels modified Eastern forms but used Greek decorative elements.

The small inscriptions inside the mouths of the amphora and the phial show where they were made. They give the weight of the vessels in Greek numbers. In Antiquity the unit of weight was the coin. The weight of both vessels is expressed in the equivalent of coins 8.49 gm each. This is slightly higher than the weight of the Persian gold coin, which weighed around 8.40 gm. Coins weighing more than the Persian gold coin were used in only one city — the Greek colony of Lampsakos on the southern side of the Dardanelles. It is certain that most of the treasure was made in the Lampsakos' workshops.

The enormous significance of the Panagyurishtë treasure does not lie in the fact that it is made of gold, nor in the original shapes of the vessels. Its importance to science is very great, because it marks the clash between the tastes of two worlds: the Eastern world dominated by Achaimenidean Persia, and the Western world led by the Greeks. This clash took place in a country belonging neither to the Persians, nor to the Greeks — in a city on the Dardanelles, close to Thrace, but on the boundary between Europe and Asia. We can see not only how the so-called Hellenistic art was formed, of which few traces have been found, but also to determine the role the Thracians played in its formation.

Room 4. The Spiritual World of the Thracians

When life became more peaceful around the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, after considerable migration by the Thracians, an extremely simple form of art emerged in the lands around the Aegean Sea. This art made use of very simple geometrical forms. The main theme was the animal world. It flourished in Greece as is known from many geometrical bronze statuettes of animals. Although rarely, similar animal figurines were found in Thrace (Case 1). However, another monument which appeared frequently in Thrace, was not found in Greece, namely the iron sceptres topped by a bronze axe, with a decorated heel. Heads or whole animal figures: bulls, rams, goats, deers and sometimes horses, appear on the posterior side of this cult axe. This type of axe is a distant echo of similar more artistic examples from Asia Minor, which reached even the Celts who then inhabited the lands of present-day Austria. These axes were symbols of the royal power of the Thracian priest-kings.

The early bronze ornaments on horse-trappings and armaments (12), which appeared in the 7th-6th century BC, seem to have been another power symbol of the priest-kings. Most typical of that time was the heads-piece found in the village of Sofronievo, Vratsa district (13). Decorated with two bird's wings and a tail, it is dominated by a ram's head. Thus, throughout the entire period between the 10th and the 5th century BC all artistic works were cast in bronze, were geometrical in shape and were decorated with animal images.

After the 6th century BC geometrical art began to be replaced by another art, also stylized and again decorative, but using other materials: mainly silver and less frequently gold, i.e. two forged metals. The animal theme began to include imaginary animals (gryphons or winged deer) and wild beasts (most frequently lions, wolves and bears). While Greek art was reaching its peak as an urban art form which tended to present animals, people and nature carefully but idealistically, Thracian art continued to develop around the ruler's court and to be purely decorative. Images and ornaments were used to decorate parts of horse trappings, belts, shields, helmets, armour gold and silver vessels (16).

It is interesting that the Thracian artist did not use Greek ornamental motifs, but rather motifs from Achaimenide toreutics in Persia, which also

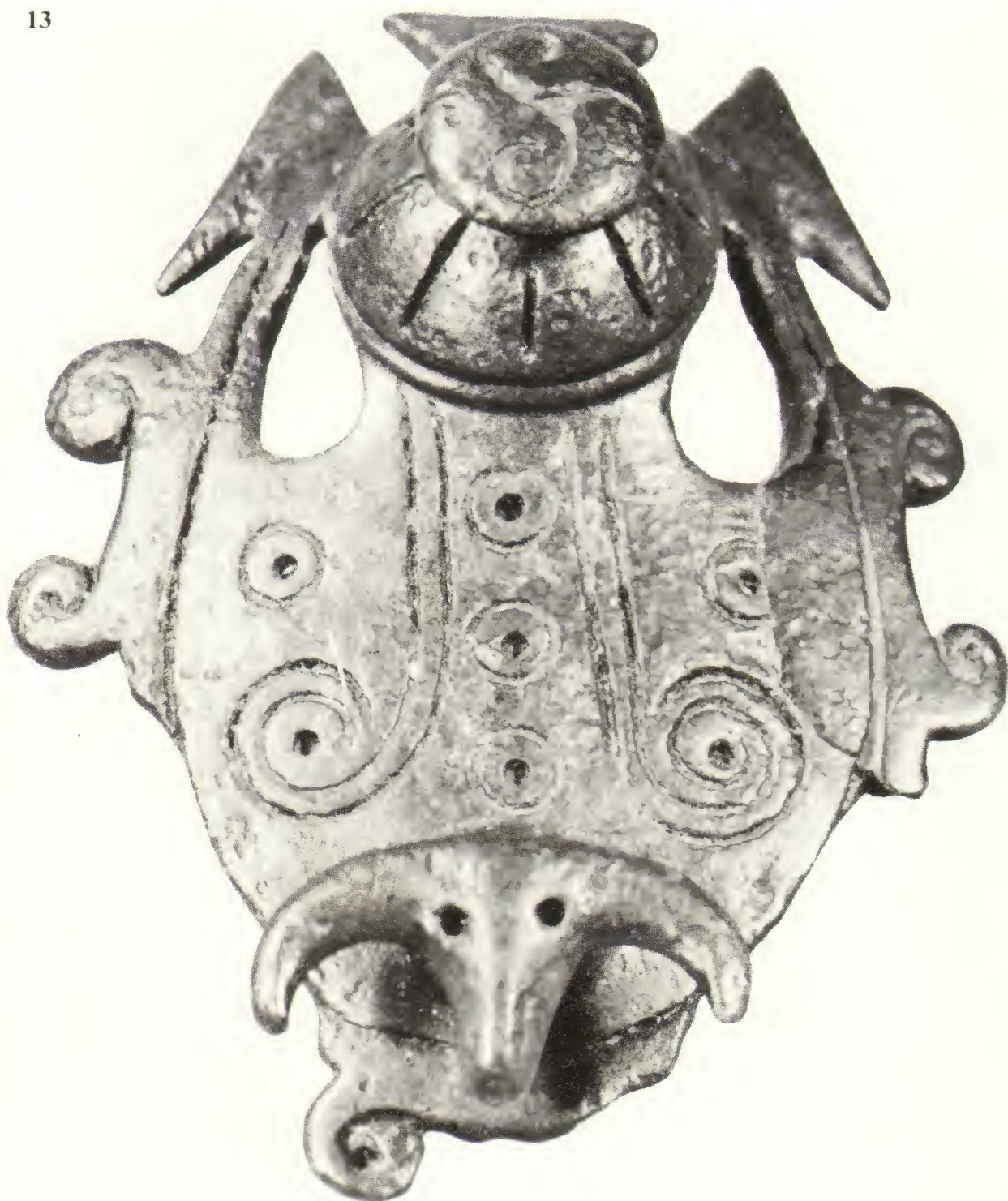
12. Knife with a scabbard, iron, gold, village of Belogradets, Varna district, 8th-7th century BC, height 20.1 cm



13. Head-piece, bronze, village of Sofronievo, Vratsa district 7th-6th century BC, height 27 cm

14. Helmet, bronze, Corinthian type, village of Chelopech, Sofia district, 6th-5th century BC, height 27 cm

used stylized images of animals, most frequently lions. The Thracian artist liked the way in which the animal's head, shoulder or hip were stylized, or the head viewed from above. This link between Thrace and the East was very natural. The Thracian artist lived among people leading a definitely rural life, like the majority of the population in Persia. Both Thracian and Persian families were polygamic and last but not least, both the Thracians and the Persians lived in states ruled by kings. All this increased the distance between Thracian and Greek art, in spite of the presence of Greek colonists along the entire Thracian coast who also had links with the art of the East. Thracian art was very close to Scythian art in Southern



Russia from the 5th and 4th century BC.

Thracian art followed its own path of development. It often used (cases 2 and 3) stylizations of animal images in the Eastern fashion. Examples of this are the horse trapping ornaments from Badnyakovo, Orizovo, Brezovo and Teteven (case 2). Or it transformed them into zoomorphic baroque by mixing various animal ornaments. The development of this art by the Thracian masters was a reaction against the art of the Greek colonists. They tried to detach themselves from the free, nonstylized Greek art, which developed along completely different lines during the 5th and 4th century and served entirely different purposes. The first half of the 4th century BC marked the culmination point in the development of this oriental style in Thracian art. Even Thracian stone sculpture was influenced by this Eastern style. An example is the image of a lion taken from the tumulus near the town of Strelcha (on the pedestal behind Case 6), which adorned the pediment of the Thracian tomb. The lion's head is strongly stylized, the paws are in the same unlikely position which often occurs in Achaimenide monuments.

The first attempts at portraying human figures were discovered on the belt from the village of Lovets, Stara Zagora district (Case 2) and there are also many in the treasure from the village of Letnitsa, Lovech district (Case 6), where they were already an ornamental element on silver horse



15. Kylix with black figures, clay, 5th century BC, Schulz Collection, height 9 cm

16. Head-piece, village of Sveshtari, Razgrad district, 5th century BC, height 7.4 cm

trappings (19). In this treasure dated to the rule of the Thracian King Kotys (383-359 BC) part of the decorations are in the typical Thracian style: open-work ornaments without background, representing here the fight of a lion with a gryphon or gryphons, as well as other zoomorphic ornaments in heraldic groups. However, in addition there are many different scenes showing a god on horseback, who is obviously the anonymous Thracian hero-god. In one appliqué he is being pursued by a wolf, in another he is fighting a bear (18) and trampling a wolf with his feet, but always with a spear in his hand. Finally in one appliqué the Thracian artist has shown him without a horse, owing to a change in the theme,

15



because he is depicted during sexual intercourse with one goddess in the presence of another.

The horsemen's images from the village of Letnitsa, Lovech district, are characterized by their naiveté, but nevertheless they demonstrate the artist's obvious wish to present accurately both the animal and its rider. He was more successful with the first task. The rider is shown in a cuirass and trousers made of plaques resembling fish scales, which covered him from his ankles to his neck. In this way the Thracian artist did not have to show the anatomy of the human body, but was more concerned, like Eastern artists, with the clothing. Nevertheless, he had a knowledge of human anatomy, which is obvious from the Borovo treasure.

The Borovo treasure (Case 9) consists of three rhyta, one jug and a large silver bowl. It can be accurately dated, because three of the vessels bear inscriptions showing that the vessels were produced in the workshops of the Odrysian King Kotys (383-359 BC). This makes it possible to see an artist at work in a large workshop of the Thracian king. One of the rhyta bears all the features of Persian toreutics. Its lower part is in the shape of a bull's protome. The picture is strongly stylized, with legs bent under the body and the shoulder rendered in the form of a lotus blossom, as in Persian art. The mane is also highly stylized and arranged decoratively behind the animal's cheek and on its front. Horizontal cannelures cover the upper part of the rhyton, as on Persian rhyta. The other rhyton is in the shape of the protome of a siren with a female head (20). It has the legs of a quadruped instead of bird's legs. The interpretation of the image is like that on Greek vessels. The third rhyton ends in a horse protome — a common form of ornamentation used in the 4th century BC on rhyta from Asia Minor and Thrace.

The most interesting object in the treasure, however, is the small silver jug (21). It is covered by two friezes of images set one above the other,

which encircle the entire body. The upper frieze presents a procession of Satyrs, Maenads and Sileni, dancing and playing various wind instruments, with whom two lovers — Orpheus and Euridice — are mingling. The lower frieze contains the most important figures, shown during a feast. Seated at the table are Dionysos and Persephone, the latter holding a serpent in her hands. In front of them an Eros is holding out a phial containing wine which he is taking from the crater. Behind them the central figure in this frieze is a Thracian deity (a Silenus, according to some, Zalmoxis, according to others). Dionysos and the other god are each holding a rhyton ending with a siren's protome in one hand and phial in the other. A second Eros is dancing before that god. In this way the Thracian artist has depicted the feasts of Dionysos with his *thiasos* (a retinue of demi-gods) in heaven.

The large bowl in the treasure is the work of some local artist.

Each of the vessels in the treasure has its own particular features. However, the jug with its numerous images of deities is indisputably the most interesting. Although Thracian in origin, they are depicted in the Greek style. If the jug were not inscribed with the name of Kotys, we would have certainly attributed it to some Greek craftsman who must have been a very good artist.

The blending of Persian and Greek forms and ornaments clearly sug-



gests the links of the Thracian artist with both types of art. It should be strongly emphasized, however, that scholars usually maintain that this penetration of Eastern motifs into Greek art and vice versa came after Alexander the Great (335-323 BC). The Borovo treasure is important because it shows these characteristic features to have appeared much earlier, before the reign of Philip II and as early as Kotys (383-359). Thus, Thrace was one of the countries where the two types of art clashed much earlier.

Greek and Eastern art meet again in one of the late finds dated to the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 3rd century BC in the ornaments used on horse trappings discovered in the village of Kralevo, Turgovishtë district (Case 8). Here two appliqués (25) present Heracles with a lion skin over his shoulders — in the unusual guise of a Greek hero, with long beard and moustache. In two other appliqués the gryphon is presented in an entirely Eastern form.

Thracian art, originally simple and geometrical, was at first close to the art form which developed in the lands around the Aegean Sea. In the course of time, however, it moved nearer to the art of the Eastern peoples. At first it borrowed forms from the East, then themes, and finally means of expression and style. Eastern art, like Thracian art, developed in the courts of kings and satraps of Achaimenide Persia. It appealed to the Thracians with its richness and magnificence, but was alien with its cold monumentality. The Thracian artist adapted this art into a strange baroque of zoomorphic ornaments and shapes, adding lightness and mobility, best seen in the mould from the village of Gurchinovo, Shoumen district (Case 1). He endowed it with a certain freedom which replaced the oppressive listlessness of Achaimenide art. Moreover, in Achaimenide art, some of the monuments resemble contemporary Greek monuments, others — Assyrian, and there are also motifs taken from the art of other peoples, with which the Persians had contacts. Such an eclectism is apparent in Thracian art. Monuments, entirely Eastern in appearance, were found side by side with objects which the Thracian craftsman had made in the Greek style.

17



17. Pectoral, gold, village of Douvanli, Plovdiv district, early 5th century BC, length 25.9 cm

18. Appliqué (Horseman attacking a bear), silver with gilt, treasure from the village of Letnitsa, Lovech district, 380—350 BC, height 5 cm

19. Appliqué (Horseman and a horse's head), silver with gilt, treasure from the village of Letnitsa, Lovech district, 380-350 BC, height 4.5 cm



20. Rhyton with siren's protome, silver with gilt, treasure from the village of Borovo, Roussé district, first half of the 4th century BC, height 20.2 cm

21. Jug, silver, treasure from the village of Borovo, Roussé district, first half of the 4th century BC, height 18.2 cm

The Thracians produced great quantities of gold, silver and bronze monuments from the end of the 6th to the beginning of the 3rd century BC, when the Thracian aristocracy was looking towards the East. When Achaimenid Persia left the historical arena after the first decades of the 3rd century BC, the art declined together with tastes, ideas and the wealth of the Thracian aristocracy.





The Prehistoric Age

Everywhere on earth mankind lived through an entire age during which there was no appreciable progress in material and spiritual culture. This period began about 100,000 years BC. At that time, man, in constant struggle with Nature, tried to settle in caves which offered good living conditions. In Bulgaria such caves were, e.g. Bacho Kiro, Samouilitsa, etc. He also lived in open settlements, usually in inaccessible places, such as the locality near the *Orfei* mountain hut in the Rhodopes. The only remains of human habitation of such settlements are weapons or tools, usually made of broken pieces of uncut stone (Room 9, Cases 1-4).

This is known as the Palaeolithic Age. The first signs of the existence of some spiritual life appeared towards the end of the Late Palaeolithic Age. These were ornaments or amulets made of bears' teeth. Hunting and the gathering of wild fruit and seeds provided the main sources of food at that time.

The first higher culture in Bulgaria emerged in the 7th millennium BC and it was the oldest in Europe. The population no longer depended on hunting and fruit-gathering, because farming and stockbreeding had been developed. People knew how to build relatively spacious and convenient dwellings of hedge wattle and daub. The dwellings consisted of two rooms and had an oven and a stone quern. Made for a family consisting of the father, mother and children, a few such dwellings were at first enough to accommodate the tribal community. As the community grew, the number of dwellings in the settlement increased. The settlements were either open, or fortified i.e. surrounded by a defensive palisade, again made of wattle and daub.

When a settlement was used for a long time, its level gradually rose as a result of the accumulated remains. This is how the tells appeared. The smaller tells rose to a height of 5-6 m, the larger ones reached a height of 15-20 m. The finds from these settlements, which were left in dwellings, burnt or destroyed, give a clear picture of the achievements of human society at that time. From the very beginning of this cultural period man started to make his tools and weapons from well smoothed stone and from this new way of working with stone comes the name of the period — Neolithic Age.

About the middle of the 5th millennium BC a great change took place in the Bulgarian lands. The population learned to recognize copper ores and to produce the first metal — copper. They did not stop using their stone tools and weapons, but started to use copper utensils as well, because they already knew how to forge copper. That is why this new age, which was marked by the introduction of copper, is usually referred to as the Chalcolithic or Aeneolithic Age. During this period ore-mining and copper production are considered to be the first crafts practised outside the home. See Room 10.

Many of the settlements which existed during the Neolithic Age continued during the Aeneolithic Age as well, e.g. the tells near Karanovo (near the town of Nova Zagora), Ovcharovo (Turgovishté district), near Roussé and in many other places. The old crafts gradually became more sophisticated during the Neolithic and Aeneolithic Ages. People made arrow-heads from bone and flintstone. They also made spears and knives, and even clay pallets for slings (Case 5), which were used for hunting and for fighting. Fishing tools were also made: bone harpoons and bone hooks for the fishing lines. Man learnt to make ropes and fishing nets with weights of fired clay (Case 6).

Picks and hoes for working the land were made of deer antlers or of stone. Antlers were also used to make sickles (3). The antlers were splint and flintstone teeth were inserted in the cleft (Case 7 and 8). Wheat was ground in a stone quern to make flour (Case 8). The flour was gathered up by means of small bone spoons (Case 7).

An impression of the state of stockbreeding at that time can be obtained not only from the many tools made of bone or horn, but also from the numerous figurines of domestic animals made of fired clay — a theme peculiar to the art of the period (Case 9). The stone and later the copper axes or adzes served both for cutting and for shaping wood (Case 13),

which was used both for heating and as a building material. Having learnt how to use a wooden spindle to twist threads from plant fibres and wool, the woman began to weight her spindle with clay whorls and learnt to weave coarse fabric and mats. For the purpose she used a primitive vertical loom (Case 14). The warp was passed round the beam and left to hang down. The lower ends of the warp were weighted with fired clay.

Pottery was one of the most important crafts of the Neolithic and Aeneolithic man. Initially the craftsmen had no wheel. In order to shape the vessels, the potter used moulds around which he wound bands of well-mixed and drawn clay (Cases 18-20). Polychrome decoration is seen even on the oldest clay vessels, dated to the 7th century BC. The potter usually applied black and white paint over the original reddish or brown colour of the clay. Sometimes he applied simple plastic ornament as well (7). The vessels are original and varied: zoomorphic and anthropomorphic shapes were common (2).

Regional differences in culture can be most clearly seen in pottery. The shape and ornamentation differed from area to area, and it is possible to establish the contacts between the different settlements. This is why, the culture of a certain area is usually given the name of the settlement in which the first discovery was made, for instance the Karanovo culture, widespread in parts of South-eastern Bulgaria. The Chavdar-Kremikovtsi



22. Appliqué with Heracles' image, silver, Panagyurishtë, Plovdiv district, 4th-3rd century BC, diameter 8.6 cm

culture is named after the two settlements in Western Bulgaria where it has been studied.

Aeneolithic finds which are rare but typical of the Bulgarian lands are the models of clay dwellings (Case 16). They had round apertures for windows and doors, as well as ridged roofs. The walls were decorated on the outside with incised or painted ornaments.

The appearance of metallurgy in the Bulgarian lands after the middle of the 5th millennium BC — earlier than anywhere else in Europe — led to great changes in the entire culture. The first mines for the extraction of the oldest metal — copper — have been discovered near Mechi Kladenets. Mining was done in open pits in which picks made from antlers have been found. After the discovery of copper, the hammers used to obtain and to beat the metal began to be made of copper too (Case 17). The use of copper spread to all spheres of life. In addition to tools and weapons, copper was also used for making ornaments. The first forms of metal bracelets and rings were created (Case 15).

Even in the remotest centuries of the 7th millennium BC mankind felt the need for religion (Room 11). Small, usually tripod tables have been found among the ruins of the dwellings. These little tables were made of fired clay, decorated with ornaments and used for cult rituals. In the dwellings there were also idols of goddesses and gods (8). The most popular



23

was the Goddess-Mother, most frequently represented as a pregnant woman (Cases 21 and 22). The idols were usually made of fired clay or of boné, and they are evidence of an anthropomorphic religion. The primitive artist did not try to make the human forms of the deities true to life. They are highly stylized and decorated with incised ornaments, which emphasize the conventional clothing. Bone idols are very stylized. Towards the end of the Aeneolithic Age, the modelling of idols was already on the point of growing into real stone sculpture. Idols made of marble or of some other stone were quite common.

One of the most significant of the cult monuments of this period is the cult scene from the prehistoric settlement near the village of Ovcharovo, Turgovishtë district (6). Human figurines, either seated on chairs or erect, are arranged around tables on which different types of food are made of clay. There are also two altars, with solar symbols incised in them. The whole group is an attempt to create a composition of figurines made individually. They clearly depict a scene from the solar cult, while the figurines represent priests (Case 23). Another example of a monument with religious significance is the model of a cult building made of fired clay found in the Stara Zagora mineral spas (Case 23).

The first gold objects belonging to the Chalcolithic Age are shown in Room 1.

23. Phial with the name of the Thracian King Kotys (385-359 BC), silver, Vratsa, diameter 12.5 cm

24. Appliqué with zoomorphic image, silver, Vratsa, early 4th century, height 8.5 cm



Ancient Thrace

It is difficult to define the reason for the decline of the brilliant epoch at the end of the Chalcolithic Age. Scholars assume that large-scale migrations and movements of people took place throughout Europe at that time, as well as influxes of new populations, which indisputably came from the East. However, this was the time when everywhere in Europe people were developing the use of copper. By mixing it with tin or with other metals, they started producing bronze from which they began to make their tools and weapons. This took place around 3,200 BC and during the next two millennia. Bronze continued to be important until c. 1,200 BC. The discovery of bronze also brought about a change in the working of metal. While copper is forged, bronze is cast. In this way a new craft — casting — came into man's life. It had a number of advantages, because once a bronze object was made, it could be used later for casting exact copies in earth moulds. This made it possible to reproduce shapes exactly and to produce weapons and tools rapidly and in series.

The first evidence of the presence of Thracians in the Bulgarian lands dates from the end of the Bronze Age. Indeed, this evidence comes mainly from Greek legends and from the Greek epics. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* which describe the Trojan War in the 13th century BC mention the Thracian King Rhesus, who took part in the defence of Troy. The *Iliad* mentions even earlier kings, such as Lykurgos, ruler of the Thracians who lived along the Dardanelles. The legend about this king is connected with the god Dionysos who, together with his troops, wanted to cross the Straits from Asia into Europe. Since Lykurgos tried to deceive and kill Dionysos, the god killed him. He then installed a man called Charops as king of the Thracians, whom he instructed in the mystic rituals, i.e. the religious rituals in honour of Dionysos. Charops handed down the royal power to his son Oiagros, who in turn passed it on to his son Orpheus. He gave the mystic rituals the form which they had in later times. There are also data about other Thracian priest-kings, such as Musaeos, Eumolpos, and Sineus. However, they were all connected with events from the 13th and 12th century BC, i.e. from the very end of the Bronze Age. Room 10 and 11 display unique monuments, associated with the formation of the Thracian tribal community.

Among the oldest monuments which can be associated with the Thracians of that time, there are several steles (the corridor in front of Room 10), the earliest of which dates from the beginning of the Bronze Age. These are the oldest steles in Bulgaria. The first figural ornaments are found on later monuments of this type. Although shapes and ornaments taken from earlier periods were often reproduced and developed in Bronze Age pottery, drawn ornaments disappeared. Asymmetrical vessels were preferred. These are ordinary vessels shaped like bellows — *askos* — or jugs with obliquely-cut mouths. Strictly symmetrical shapes also developed, such as cups of the Trojan type — slim and tall, with two symmetrical handles set on opposite sides. Since these cups are found in almost all Bronze Age strata in Troy, they are known as Trojan-type cups. Numerous exhibits of pottery of this type are on display (the corridor in front of Room 10).

A peculiar variant of the Bronze-age culture developed in North-western Bulgaria and in the adjacent areas of Yugoslavia and Romania toward the end of that period, i.e. in the 13th-12th century BC. It is known in Bulgaria from the necropolis near the village of Orsoya, Lom region (Case 7 in the corridor and Case 6 in Room 10). Pottery decorated with incised ornaments and encrusted with white paint predominates among the objects discovered in the necropolis. Vessels in the shape of birds with similar decorations were also found in the necropolis. It is interesting that idols made of fired clay, which were absent almost throughout the whole of the Bronze Age, reappeared in the necropolis near Orsoya.

The evolution of culture during the greater part of the Bronze Age was slow, and no great leaps were made between 3,200 and 1,600 BC. There are no important monuments from this period. Interesting monuments appeared only as late as the last phase of the Bronze Age, between the 16th and the 12th century BC. Most of them are rare finds of bronze

swords from graves. The swords belong to two types. One of them is the so called *rapier*- a sword with a crossed hilt and with high a protruding edge along the entire length of the blade, which ends in a sharp point intended for piercing. Almost the same type of swords occurred in Greece during the last phase of the Bronze Age, which was known there as the Mycenaean Age, therefore these swords are also referred to as Mycenaean-type swords. In addition to these swords, there was also another type in Bulgaria made for cutting and common to the lands along the middle course of the Danube. These swords have a straight hilt (Room 11). Swords at that time were a rare and expensive weapon, and they were probably royal insignia.

During that turbulent age of wars and incursions, the kings and the rich people in their retinues often buried their wealth in order to hide it. This was a common phenomenon in Europe. The treasures in fact consisted only of tools and weapons made of bronze, because the great advantage of this alloy was that it could always be reprocessed. In Bulgaria these treasures, or *dépôts* as they are also called, most frequently contain hollow bronze axes or bronze sickles. Dozens of such treasures are known in Bulgaria and are dated to the last phase of the Bronze Age.

A substantial improvement in bronze casting in Bulgaria was marked by the introduction of moulds to cast various bronze weapons or tools.

25



25. Appliqué with Heracles' head, gold, village of Kralevo, Turgovishtë district, 3rd century BC, diameter 4.1 cm

26. Treasure consisting of nine vessels, gold, Panagyurishtë Plovdiv district, mid 4th century BC, height 28 cm





They were made of schist, a soft stone which is not resistant to high temperatures. This is why the desired object was cast not in metal but in wax. Then the wax casting was placed in a mould made of earth and the final cast was made from this mould, as is done today. In this way one mould could be used to cast many weapons and tools from wax and then they could all be cast from metal.

The moulds from Pobit Kamuk, Razgrad district (Case 4 in Room 11) are among the most interesting exhibits. They were produced in a royal workshop specializing in casting royal insignia. The workshop in which the moulds were found was destroyed during some military conflict and the moulds remained buried until they were accidentally unearthed and taken to the museum in Razgrad. One of the moulds, made up of several parts was designed for casting swords (9). Much more interesting however, are two other moulds, each consisting of seven parts, which were used for casting other royal insignia — the decoration of a sceptre, resembling the old hammer-axes from the Chalcolithic Age, discovered in the necropolis in Varna (cf. Room 1).

The moulds were extremely well made. While one side is carefully shaped like a hammer, the other side, usually shaped like an axe, is transformed into an artistically executed spiral. The cannelures decorating the spiral-shaped part of the hammer-axe are remarkable in their exquisite and precise workmanship. They are the work of a real artist-craftsman, who was perfectly familiar with the technical aspects of casting as well, leaving grooves on the moulds, along which the wax was poured into the mould, thus filling it entirely.

The royal workshop in Pobit Kamuk, designed to produce royal insignia, was destroyed and never restored. The moulds were found among the ruins. The destruction of the workshop probably meant not only the end of the workshop, but also of the ruler whom it served. It disappeared during one of those migratory periods when bronze axes and sickles were buried and remained in the ground. It should be added that the products from the workshop in Pobit Kamuk were indeed rare during that period. No such moulds have been found anywhere else. And this is not the most important conclusion. Much more important is the fact that hammer-axes of this type, produced using such moulds, are the first of their kind to be found in the Bulgarian lands. We could not even have known that such objects existed, if a similar sceptre cast in bronze had not been miraculously discovered in a find of bronze objects buried in the earth, dated to the last phase of the Bronze Age. Indeed the find is not from Bulgaria, but from a neighbouring area — Romania, and it clearly shows that the hammer-axes, used as sceptres with the axe transformed into a decorative spiral, were common over a wide area on both banks of the Lower Danube.

The turbulent age of the workshop in Pobit Kamuk and of the cache of bronze sickles and axes buried in the ground, also necessitated the hiding of yet another royal treasure — the Vulchitrun treasure (see Room 2).

In the lands around the Aegean Sea at the very end of the 2nd and in the first half of the 1st millennium BC deep changes took place. One of the most important of these changes was the introduction of a new metal — iron — for making weapons and tools. During the 12th or 11th century iron gradually took over from bronze, which already was being used only for ornaments and decorations. The introduction of iron resulted again in changes in the technology of weapon production, because iron

27. Amphora-rhyton, gold, treasure from Panagyurishtë, Plovdiv district, 4th century BC, height 28 cm



is forged and not cast. With these changes mankind entered a new age, known as the Iron Age.

The beginning of this new age, coincided with great ethnographic changes in the entire area surrounding the Aegean Sea. Many of the islands, as well as parts of Attika and Boeotia in Greece, were inhabited by Thracians at that time. The Greeks gradually pushed the Thracian population away from the islands and settled there. They conquered the Thracian lands in Boeotia, Attika and in the island of Euboea and established colonies along the western coast of Asia Minor, where in Moesia and in Troad they found Thracian populations. In addition, parts of the Thracian tribes of the Kebrenioi and Skaioi lived there, of which another part lived on the opposite side of the Dardanelles, in Europe. Part of the Thynoi and Bithynoi lived to the south of the Bosphorus, while the remaining members of their tribes were in South-eastern Thrace. They once lived along the Strymon (today the Strouma) valley.

Thracian tribes in Europe are mentioned in the writings of ancient authors, above all Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophontes. The Dologkoi were on the Gallipoli Peninsula. To the north of the Thynoi were the Skyrmiadai and Nipsaioi. To the north of the Dologkoi and to the west of the Maritsa river were the Sapaioi, whose neighbours were the Odrysae. They inhabited that part of the Maritsa river where the Toundja flows in, as well as the entire valley of the Arda river. The Satrae lived along the upper course of the Maritsa river. To the south of them in the Aegean region were the Edones, Kikones and Bisaltae, the latter living along the banks of the Strouma river. The Migdones and the Krestonaioi were in Macedonia along the Gallikos and Vardar rivers, whereas along the middle course of the Strouma the Sintoi and Maidoi were neighbours of the Paiones living by the Bulgarian river, and of the Paionian tribes — Agranēs and Laiaioi — living along the Upper Strouma. The Serdoi lived along the upper course of the Isker river and the Triballoi — along the Lower Isker and the Morava rivers. The Bessi were along the Upper Maritsa and the Koilaetae — along the middle course of Maritsa. The Krobyzoi were in the lands between the river Yantra and Varna Bay, while to the north of them, on both sides of the lowermost reaches of the Danube, were the Getae. The names of many other tribes are known, but evidence about them is scanty and unreliable.

Each of these tribes formed its state, ruled by a king. Sometimes two tribes could have one king or one tribe would have more kings. Thracian tribes did not have a strictly defined territory. It grew or became smaller according to their strength. Due to the dispersion of the tribes, the Thracian people could not defend all its lands and so each tribe looked after its own. This is why the Greeks, who as a maritime nation colonized the entire Mediterranean coast gradually settled, from almost the beginning of the 7th century BC, along the entire Thracian coast as well, from the Chalkidik Peninsula to the mouth of the Danube.

Greek colonization did not proceed according to a preliminary plan. The Greek city-states set up colonies because of the social, economic and demographic problems they faced at the time. Thus, gradually between the 7th and the middle of the 5th century, all the navigable sections of the Thracian coast fell into the hands of the Greek colonists. Most of the colonists in Thrace came from the Aegean islands and from Asia Minor. Athens formed its colonies along the Aegean coasts. They included a small kingdom of Thracians and Greeks on the Gallipoli Peninsula, with many cities grouped under the name Thracian Chersonesos, as well as the city of Amphipolis. Along the Black Sea coast the main role was played by the city of Miletus which established Appollonia (now Sozopol) and Odessos (now Varna). Mesembria (now Nessebur) was set up by Kalenon and Byzantion (cities on both sides of the Bosphorus). Along the Thracian coasts of the Aegean Sea, the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea many other cities set up more than fifty colonies.

Greek colonists along the Thracian coast brought urban life into Thrace. However, even the Greek colonists who came to Thrace several generations later, were farmers and stock-breeders. Their cities gradually became trading centres which imported goods from the mainland: cattle, hides, timber for shipbuilding, wax and honey, and exported luxury goods. Organized

like cities with their own institutions, the Greek colonies differed from the large Greek centres in Hellas and Asia Minor, where crafts and to a certain extent farming, used great number of slaves as workforce. They bought slaves from Thrace and sold them to other countries.

During the second half of the 6th century BC the Greek colonists and the Thracian tribes were threatened by the Kingdom of the Achaimenides. Achaimenidie Persia seized South-eastern Thrace and in 513 BC King Darius used it as a base for his march against the Scythians, passing from the Bosphorus to the Danube estuary. After he returned, he extended his possessions in the Aegean region, and Xerxes, his successor, conquered the lands along the lower reaches of the Axios river (now the Vardar) and used them as a base for his marches against Greece during the Graeco-Persian wars. After ruling Southern Thrace for more than forty years, the Persians finally withdrew from Europe in 476 BC.

It is not known whether Teres, King of the Odrysae, transformed their small kingdom into a powerful state before or after the withdrawal of the Persian troops. Thanks to the heavily armed cavalry, which he himself formed, he conquered the tribes along the middle and lower reaches of the Maritsa river, as well as those in the Strandja and Sakar mountains, and forced the Greek colonies along the coast of the Sea of Marmara to pay tribute to him. In the north he went down from the Eastern Balkan



28

28. Bowl with the image of the Thracian horseman, silver, village of Yakimovo, Mihailovgrad district, 1st century BC, diameter 16 cm

Mountains and captured the lands along the Danube. The Getae also fell to Teres. During the reign of his sons — Sparadokos, and especially Sitalkes — in 431 BC, the Odrysae followed the Strouma river all the way to the Chalkidike Peninsula and fought with the Macedonians who at that time had a small kingdom in the lands to the west of the Middle Vardar. During this period the kingdom of the Odrysae reigned over Upper Isker and Upper Strouma. The Odrysian Kingdom reached its largest dimensions and greatest power at the time of Seuthes I, who left the scene around 410 BC.

After a crisis during which the Odrysian Kingdom suffered from internal conflicts, Kotys came to power (385-359 BC). He restored the unity of the Odrysian state, though for a short time only. After his death it was divided into three kingdoms and gradually, during the reign of Philip II (359-335 BC), Macedonia, which was the main rival of the Odrysian Kingdom, conquered a large part of Thrace. Alexander III the Great (335-323 BC) fought against the Getae and the Triballoi, forced them to recognize him as their ruler and set off on his campaigns against the Persians in Asia Minor.

Of all the lands conquered by Alexander the Great, Thrace was the most unreliable Macedonian province. As early as 330 BC, Memnon, appointed by Alexander as strategos of Thrace, rebelled. The Thracian King Seuthes III joined the rebellion. He founded his capital Seuthopolis on the upper reaches of the Toundja river. It is now covered by the waters of the *Georgi Dimitrov* dam. After Alexander's death one of his generals, Lysimachos, seized power in the Northern part of Asia Minor and in South-eastern Thrace. Seuthes, in union with the King of the Getae, Dromichaïtes, fought against Lysimachos (323-281 BC), but the war was never concluded, because neither Lysimachos nor Seuthes succeeded in gaining the upper hand.

After the death of Lysimachos in 279 BC, the Celts invaded Thrace. Moving across from Central Europe, through Macedonia and the Aegean region, they penetrated into Thrace and Asia Minor. Part of the Celts established a kingdom in the lands around the southern hills of the Strandja Mountain. This kingdom existed until 216 BC. In the same year it was destroyed, the Romans set foot on the Adriatic coast of the Balkan Peninsula. After this the only significant events were the three wars waged by the Romans against the Macedonians. During these wars the crisis in Thrace worsened and the Odrysian kingdom was in the power of the Macedonians. Although it existed as a separate state, it was dependent to a greater or lesser extent on the Macedonian kings.

In 168 BC the Roman Republic defeated its strongest rival in the struggle for supremacy over the Balkan Peninsula. Macedonia became a Roman province and later the same fate befell Greece as well. Then the Romans turned to Thrace. The Romans constantly interfered in the relations between the Thracian tribes and the Odrysian kingdom, which was weak and very often depended on Roman help. The Odrysae helped the Romans to conquer the lands along the Lower Danube and divided with them the lands of present-day Northern Bulgaria. In this way the Odrysian Kingdom lived through its last zenith as a Roman protectorate at the end of the 1st century BC and the beginning of the 1st century AD. At that time it again occupied the whole territory from the Sea of Marmara to the Lower Danube and to the Isker in the west. Further to the west was the Roman province of Moesia which bordered in the south with Macedonia, somewhere to the south of Skopje and to the north of Veles.

29. Chalice, Bosco Reale type, silver, Stara Zagora, 1st century, height 11.9 cm

30. Appliqué, silver with gilt, Stara Zagora, 1st century, diameter 17.8 cm



So far we have presented the most important events in the life of the Thracian people. These events are related to the life of the Thracian community and to the development of its culture.

The great stirring of the population in the Balkan Peninsula at the end of the 2nd millennium BC was the reason why part of the inhabitants of Peloponessos left their lands and occupied the Greek islands and the Asia Minor coast. They carried some of their cultural traditions with them to their new fatherland. Such is the case, for example, with the *tholoi*. These monumental tombs of huge dimensions, consisting of a dome built of quadrae, began to be built both in the Aegean islands and in Asia Minor during most of the 1st millennium. The population of South-eastern Thrace also started building them from large roughly hewn slabs. These were the dolmens, most numerous in the low mountains — Strandja and Sakar. The Thracians in the Eastern Rhodopes and in the Eastern Balkan mountain made similar tombs by digging them out of the rock. The dolmens were covered by a tumulus. These monumental tombs were not known anywhere else in Europe during that period. They were built between the 11th and 6th centuries BC. The boundaries of the area where these tombs, known as magaliths, were widespread coincided with the boundary of the nucleus of tribes which later formed the Odrysian Kingdom.

During the 5th and 4th century the dolmens, always with a quadrangular chamber, as well as the rock tombs, which were often round, were replaced by tombs built of blocks, also quadrangular or round, and covered according to the principle of the false vault. Such are the tombs near the village of Mezek, Haskovo district (32 m long), dated to the time of Alexander the Great, the older tomb near the village of Tatarevo, Haskovo district and the tomb from the village of Vetren, Pazardjik district. Along the upper course of the Toundja river there also appeared brick *tholoi*, the most important of them being the Kazanluk tomb dated to the time of Seuthes III. In some areas of Thrace these tombs continued to be built even during the Roman epoch.

The period around the 6th-5th century BC, when the Odrysian Kingdom reached its greatest dimensions, was characterized by other deep changes in the culture of Thrace. Even during the first centuries of the 1st millennium BC ceramic production was still manual. The potter's wheel was introduced earlier in some areas and later in others, mainly in the middle of the 1st millennium BC. Moreover, among the handmade vessels there are specimens which demonstrate great skill, e.g. the *kantharos* from Krivodol village, Vratsa district (Case 2). Generally speaking the numerous forms of this type of earthenware are rather coarse, fired at relatively low temperature, the vessels did not turn red, being either grey or black (Case 7). Well-fired vessels were more widespread during later periods, when many forms appeared which were common to the pottery produced by the Greek craftsmen (Case 10) who inhabited the Thracian coast.

The second half of the 1st millennium BC is characterized by the numerous clay figurines of rams, horses and other animals frequently occurring in Thrace during the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. These clay figures were used to support the logs in the fireplace.

From the end of the 6th century BC earthenware for domestic use and painted ceramics became very common in Thrace. The painted ceramic products, made in famous Greek workshops, were imported through trade, most frequently from Attika, and more rarely from Korinthos. Ionic ceramics produced in Asia Minor and in some Greek islands, e.g. Chios and Samos were also imported (15). A considerable number of these

31. Mask-helmet, bronze, Stara Zagora, 1st century, height 23 cm

ceramic finds have come to the national History Museum from the private collection of Alexander Schulz (Cases 13-15).

Among the ornaments used in Thrace, namely bracelets, torques and rings, made mainly of bronze (Cases 1, 5, 8 and 9), the treasure from Burzitsa (Sheremet) is a rare find, although the dates of these objects remain uncertain. The most widespread ladies' ornament was the *fibula* (the ancient safety-pin) most frequently made of bronze, although in the 6th and 5th century BC there were silver and even gold fibulae. In contrast to the numerous and varied shapes of fibulae common in the period prior to the 5th century BC a very simple Thracian type of fibula appeared during the zenith of Thracian culture in the 5th-4th centuries BC. It was later replaced by fibulae of different shapes during the 3rd-1st centuries BC.

In the corridor between Rooms 13 and 14 there is a display of articles used by the Thracians in sailing.

Luxury items came early to Thracian society, although made of only certain materials. Nevertheless, they became an inseparable part of the life of the ruler and of the wealthy Thracian in general, from the end of the 6th century BC. At that time both men and women wore on their clothes numerous gold pectorals of different shapes, decorated with very simple ornaments (Case 1 in front of Room 14).

Room 14 traces the development of the Thracian state. We do not



know what the capital city of the Thracian ruler looked like, or the capital city of the powerful Odrysian kings in earlier times. The only well-known residence of a Thracian ruler is Seuthopolis, founded by Seuthes III, probably around 330 BC, which existed until 270-260 BC. The city was built in a single period of time according to the King's will. The buildings were grouped in square blocks divided by straight streets. The fortress walls had square towers and gates. All these characteristic features were known in the most culturally advanced countries, both in the East and in Greece and were used in the building of new towns. The castle set in the highest part of the fortress was also separated from the other parts of the city by a massive wall. The ruins of Seuthopolis remain below the waters of the *Georgi Dimitrov* dam. Naturally, the Hellenistic plan of the city gives no ideas as to what the residences of the Thracian kings looked like in earlier times, when they developed gradually and unobtrusively.

Indeed, it is difficult to picture a city which emerged gradually. We have a better idea of palace life because of the finds in the tumuli and the buried treasures. They reveal a life of luxury and pleasure (22). Gold and silver rhyta and phials, typical Eastern forms, coexisted with imported expensive bronze vessels. Men wearing gold pectorals, their horses gleaming with expensive trappings, and women adorned with the most beautiful gold ornaments in use during the 5th and 4th century BC — that was ancient Thrace. The lesser Thracian rulers often received gifts from the powerful kings. This was common practice during the reign of Kotys, king of the Odrysae (383-359 BC).

Some of the phials dated to that period bear inscriptions which usually contain the name of the ruler — Kotys — and the name of the craftsman who had made the vessel (23). It is interesting that these gifts from the Odrysian ruler were always sent to rulers of small kingdoms in remote areas. Although the Odrysian Kingdom then lay to the south of the Balkan Mountains, all the finds are from the lands to the north of the Balkan Mountains along the Danube. Good examples are the phials from the tumulus near the village of Alexandrovo, Lovech district (Case 2), from Mogilanska Mogila (24) near the town of Vratsa (Case 8) and from the Borovo treasure, Roussé district (in Room 7). The Borovo treasure contains two rhyta and a jug which bear inscriptions. Another phial bears an inscription with the name of Teres II, a contemporary of Philip II (c. 360-348 BC). It was a gift to a Thracian ruler in the Dobroudja area (the find is from the village of Branichevo, Shoumen district — Case 2). The name of Kotys has also been found on phials discovered in Northern Dobroudja and Romania.

Very often in hidden treasures or in grave-offerings, silver horse trappings (Case 8) are found by themselves or together with silver vessels. An example of this is the Mogilanska Mogila near Vratsa.

The phials give a picture not only of the splendour of the courts of important and minor Thracian rulers, but also of their foreign policy. More accurate information about Thracian foreign policy comes from the rare inscriptions of the Thracian kings which have somehow survived. Like almost all inscriptions in the lands surrounding the Aegean Sea at that time, they were written in Greek. An inscription dated to the last years of Seuthes III (probably c. 300 BC) shows that while he was still alive he made a settlement between his two sons and Sparadokas, another ruler in Kabyle (a Thracian town near the present-day town of Yambol). The inscription also settles questions related to a third ruler, Epimenes, who owned lands in this area. The inscription is formulated as a contract-oath (between Cases 6 and 7). A similar inscription settled problems of another unknown ruler of the Thracians living to the north and to the east of the present-day town of Nessebur. It represents a contract between the Greek colony of Mesembria and King Saddala. The inscription dates from the 4th and 3rd century BC. According to the terms, Saddala was given honorary citizenship, an honorary seat at the theatre, the right to use the city port and for its part Mesembria had to pay annual tribute to Saddala in the form of a gold wreath weighing 50 *staters* (equivalent to about 220 gm of gold). It is extremely interesting that the inscription mentions that these conditions had been accepted by Mesembria in an earlier contract made with four of Saddala's predecessors: Mopsiestes,



32. Helmet with mythological pictures, bronze with gilt, village of Bryastovets, Bourgas district, 1st-2nd century, height 19.7 cm

Tarouthinas, Medistas and Kotys — Thracian kings not mentioned in any other document. Kotys was probably the same Kotys who ruled the Odrysae (383-359 BC). The inscription (displayed between Cases 7 and 8) also settled questions arising from the ships wrecked along the coast of Saddala's territory.

It was mentioned earlier that Teres consolidated the power of the Odrysian Kingdom with the help of the heavily armed cavalry. The heavy armament included a helmet and protective armour: cuirass and greaves. At that time (5th century BC) the cuirass was made of bronze and examples have been preserved in a number of tumuli. The cuirass usually consisted of two parts: front and back. The front was modelled in the shape of the man's chest. The muscles were either stylized, as on the cuirass from the village of Svetlen, Turgovishtë district, or presented realistically, as on the cuirass from the village of Rouets, Turgovishtë district (Cases 12-14). On the greaves (from the Rhodope Mountains) the muscles of that part of the leg they covered were also shown.

Different types of bronze helmets were common in Thrace, since helmets were widely used in the entire ancient world during the 5th and 4th century BC and even later. Two unusual helmets (14) were found in the village of Chelopech, Sofia district (Cases 12-14). On one of these helmets, realistically shaped eyebrows are set above the openings for the eyes. More than thirty similar helmets have been found in Macedonia, but without this added detail. The two helmets have fixed cheek-pieces, unlike Thracian helmets which have hinged cheek-pieces. This type is also decorated with other face features: moustache and beard. The Thracian type of helmet has so far only been found in the Western Rhodope Mountains.

Among the numerous types of bridle bits used by the Thracians, first made of bronze and later of iron, the most interesting are the bits dated to the 3rd-1st century BC. They are very heavy and they have two hooks on either side to which reins are fastened. A lever hung below the bit joins the hooks. Its purpose is to check the horse by pulling the lower jaw. A variant of this bit, widespread later in Italy, is known by the name of *lupine* bit. However, undoubtedly the most interesting and the rarest is the bit from the Schulz collection. In addition to this complicated type of bit, there is also a whole bronze muzzle which prevents the horse from opening his mouth and from biting. The muzzle resembles straps and it is decorated with exquisite ornaments.

The finds of silver objects (28) belonging to this period between the 3rd and the 1st century BC, a very poor period in Thrace, are displayed in Room 4. Room 13 contains several monuments of the Odrysian Kingdom — stone inscriptions — dated to the 1st century BC.

The exposition in Room 15 is devoted to the structure of Thrace and Moesia as Roman Provinces.

After conquering Macedonia and Greece, the Romans interfered whenever possible in Thracian affairs, organizing campaigns against various Thracian tribes or against the Greek colonists along the Thracian coast. By the end of the 1st century BC they occupied part of the southern bank of the Danube, and the Odrysian Kingdom, which bordered with the newly formed provincia Moesia somewhere around the river Yantra. The Odrysian Kingdom is mentioned as a Roman protectorate for the last time in 49 AD. After that there are references only to Provincia Thracia which consisted of the entire territory of the Odrysian Kingdom and the Greek colonies along its coast. The Romans appointed a provincial ruler in Thrace, but still divided the province into small rural areas — *strategies*. They also divided the lands along the Gorni Isker, Gorna Strouma and Sredna Strouma into *strategies* of Provincia Thracia. As early as 86 AD the Romans moved the boundary of Moesia to the ridge of the Balkan Mountains and divided Moesia into two parts: Moesia Superior and Moesia Inferior. Before that the boundary passed along the Tsibritsa river.

Before the Romans, both the Odrysian kings and Philip II had founded cities in Thrace, but they were few in number and were mainly military centres. Such cities were Kabyle (near present-day Yambol), Serdica (now Sofia), Berroia (now Stara Zagora), Philippopolis (now Plovdiv), the city Kypsela on the Maritsa river in the Aegean region, Philippi between the rivers Mesta and Strouma, and other cities which have not yet been



33. Pan with syrinx, terracotta, Sandanski, Blagoevgrad district, 1st-2nd century, height 11 cm

located. The numerous Greek colonies should also be included. However, real cities, with their typical urban planning, emerged after the Romans conquered the Thracian lands. Almost all the cities in Moesia were created during Roman rule, although many of them had previously been larger or smaller settlements: Ratiaria near the village of Archar, Vidin district, Oescus near the mouth of the river Isker, Novae near the town of Svishtov, Sexanta Prista near Roussé, Durostorum (now Silistra), etc. All these cities, as well as many other smaller towns, were located along the Danube. In the interior of Provincia Moesia the Romans also transformed the old Thracian settlements into towns, such as for example, Montana near Mihailovgrad, Abritus near Razgrad. They also built entirely new cities such as Nicopolis ad Istrum near the village of Nikyup, Veliko Turnovo district, and Matrianopolis near the town of Devnya. The same changes were observed in Provincia Thracia, where side by side with the older settlements such as Anchialo (now Pomorié), Berroia later renamed Augusta Traiana (now Stara Zagora), Bessapara near the village of Saladinovo, Pazardjik district, Serdica (now Sofia) and Pautalia (now Kyustendil), entirely new cities emerged: Deultum near the village of Debelt, Bourgas district, Adrianopolis (now Edriné), Nikopolis ad Nestum near the village of Zagradé, Gotsé Delchev region, etc.

Each city was ruled by a *curia* (senate) the members of which were elected from among the wealthy citizens and its territory included neighbouring villages as well. City rule was subordinated to the ruler of the province, who controlled administration and the army. The Romans entrusted the defence of the boundaries in the Thracian lands to three legions concentrated in Moesia, namely: the First Italic, Fifth Macedonian and Eleventh Claudian legions, totalling about 15,000 men and about as many auxiliary troops divided into *alae* and cohorts. In addition, the Romans brought in people from various parts of the Empire to work as civil officials and officers in the cities and so their population increased with the rapid influx of new settlers: merchants and craftsmen.

In order to facilitate movements of the army and the official couriers, the cities began building many roads paved with stone slabs. At every mile there was a column showing the number of miles to the nearest city, the name of the builder, the name of the city and of the Emperor during whose reign the column had been erected or replaced by a new one (the corridor between Rooms 14 and 15).

Some members of the Thracian aristocracy found employment in the Roman administration as rulers of the strategies, as well as in the army, holding low officers' ranks — up to centurion. These were probably the people buried in rich barrow graves during the 1st and 2nd century AD, which contained again not only expensive vessels and ornaments, but also military insignia (32), e.g. the mask-helmets (Case 1 in the corridor and Case 2 in Room 16). They were parade helmets which were used in Italy, but mainly along the borders of the Roman Empire (31). In each province the mask-helmets displayed the distinctive characteristics of the local craftsmen. They consisted of a helmet, with a stylized or realistically presented hair, and a mask with openings for the eyes and mouth in the shape of a male face. The craftsmen attempted to make them into portraits.

Bulgaria was among the lands in the Roman Empire in which tumuli continued to exist even until the adoption of Christianity, i.e. until the first half of the 4th century AD. Rich graves again appeared in these tumuli. Sometimes they were the graves of retired professional veteran soldiers, who were inhumated with the phalerae which decorated their

34. Mould with the image of Kybele, bronze, Razgrad, 1st-2nd century, length 19 cm

35. Mould with the image of Sabasius, bronze, Razgrad, 1st-2nd century, length 22.5 cm



clothing (Case 4), most often made of silver. The soldiers wore these phalerae on their armour. Some of the phalerae are evidence of a peculiar form of art widespread in Thrace and Asia Minor. A set of such ornaments was found in Stara Zagora. They are covered with pictures. In the middle there is the picture of Heracles fighting the Nemean lion, surrounded by pairs of beasts and imaginary animals (30). The art of these phalerae is very stylized. In graves of this period there are also hemispherical chalices with tall stems. Provincial toreutics borrowed its shapes and ornamentation from models in fashion during the 1st and 2nd century AD in Italy: floral ornaments and imaginary animals. The style is identical to that of the famous *Bosco Reale* treasure from Southern Italy (29).

Many members of the provincial aristocracy in the Thracian provinces of the Roman Empire were veterans who had settled there. Usually when the Romans discharged soldiers recruited at the same time, with 28-30 years' service in the army, they gave the veterans a group military diploma which entitled them to Roman citizenship, possession of land, legalization of their illegal marriages and children, because the soldiers had no right to legal marriage or the right to contract marriage. The greatest number of such Roman military diplomas were granted in Bulgaria (Case 3).

Roman rule was also based on the economic power of the Empire. The emperor minted gold, silver and bronze coins which were used throughout the Empire. The Romans allowed some cities to mint their own coins, but only bronze coins for the needs of the local market and for the prestige of the city rulers (Case 1).

The military power, the economic strength of the Empire and the urban life brought the famous *Pax Romana* to the population of the entire Empire, as well as to the Thracian lands. The wars and the plunderings from which the Thracians once suffered stopped. The Empire took measures against its outside enemies as well. The cities were fortified with massive walls, and also the settlements on their territory. This guaranteed a peaceful life for a large part of the population. Many people became richer and the cities also possessed substantial funds. Temples, theatres, as well as other public and private buildings were put up. The cities took care of the education of the young people. Gymnasia were set up in which athletes practised various sports under the guidance of *gymnasiarchoi* (the pedestal between Cases 4 and 5). Graves from the 2nd-3rd century AD frequently contained athletic devices: bronze strigilis to clean the body and various vessels for oil (37) which the athletes rubbed on their bodies (Case 8).

Chariots with horses harnessed to them were very seldom included in grave offerings in Thracian tumuli before the Roman conquest, except in the wealthiest graves of the 4th century. The extensive use of the chariot during Roman rule meant that it became very common in Thracian graves. So many have been found that Bulgaria can justifiably be called the land of chariots. Sometimes several chariots of different types were placed in the tumuli, and the horses harnessed to the chariot were also sacrificed.

The chariots are extremely important finds because from them a picture can be formed of the numerous crafts developing in the Thracian city. They were made of wood, and whether two-wheeled or four-wheeled, their parts were often reinforced with metal. The wheels were always with metal rims. The hub and the wooden axis were also covered with metal. Metal facings were used everywhere. The upper part of the chariot was covered with silver appliqué. Those chariots which were used for luxury transport often had an additional device attached to the axles to eliminate shaking

36. Vessel with votive inscription, silver, village of Golyama Bresnitsa, Lovech district, 2nd century, diameter 9 cm

and bumping along the roads. The basket of the chariot was suspended by straps from this device (the corridor in front of Room 15).

In Antiquity horses pulled the chariots by means of yokes, like oxen. The yoke was made of wood, with bronze rings through which the reins passed. Sometimes these rings were richly ornamented. In other cases they were hidden behind plates to which silver ornaments were soldered. Ornaments were also hung on the horse's chest and flanks. The most richly decorated chariot yoke from this period is the yoke of one of the chariots found in the village of Shishkovtsi, Kyustendil district (Case 5). Small silver heads of Maenads and Satyrs are soldered on the silver-plated rings with polygonal plates on their upper side. The central image is Heracles' bust, also made of silver. All images have gilded lips, eyeballs and hair.

The rich decoration of chariots in the Bulgarian lands is not an isolated example. Here and throughout the Empire wooden furniture was reinforced or ornamented in the same way: chairs, tables, tripods and the wooden caskets used for keeping expensive objects, which are the objects most frequently found in graves. The ornaments from Stara Zagora (Cases 6 and 9) with images of Kybele or Eros were found in similar caskets. These ornaments and the ornaments on the chariots were the work of local masters and were very often far superior to that of ordinary craftsmen, who tried to reproduce the works of great masters.



This rapid development of crafts in the lands inhabited by the Thracians was due to the economic policy of the Empire. It strove to make each province self-sufficient. Crafts, therefore, flourished and developed in all the provinces throughout the entire period between the 1st and 3rd century.

The defence of the Thracian provinces of the Roman Empire was also based on this principle. Large numbers of troops were maintained only in the border provinces. This is why, when the border was moved further to the north of the Danube during Emperor Traianus' reign, the number of troops in the region decreased. However, subsequent emperors did everything within their power to fortify as many settlements as possible. On the territory of Bulgaria more than one thousand settlements were fortified in the middle of the 2nd century at the time of Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Antoninus Pius. The largest fortifications were the *castella*. The rest were *praesidia* (garrisons) and *burgs* (towers and small fortifications).

The exposition in Room 16 is devoted to the economy of Thrace and Moesia. The agricultural policy of the Empire throughout the entire period of Roman rule was to encourage large-scale farming. In most of the territories the farmer was not the owner of the land. He cultivated it in exchange for part of the crops. Slaves were used as manpower only on the Emperor's property. The landowner and the farm worker obtained farming tools from the blacksmith's workshop, where good craftsmen produced axes, picks, hoes, sickles, ploughshares, etc. (between Cases 1 and 2). The economy depended on many bronze articles produced in the bronze casting workshops: vessels, lamps, candelabra, spoons, styloi for writing (Case 3) and various other objects (Case 4). Workshops usually employed many workers and usually produced wholesale. Pottery workshops possessing large kilns produced various vessels (Case 6). In the large cities there were engravers who engraved gems or cameos, or moulds for coin minting (Cases 4 and 6). Glass and glass vessels (Case 2) were made or processed in many places. An old and widespread tradition was the production of silver vessels and cutlery (Case 3). Generally speaking, the cities rapidly started to lead a rich life which reached its zenith about the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century, when the urban way of life spread to many of the growing villages which had begun to elect their own governing bodies, similar to those in the cities.

The work of the provincial toreutic artist in a small workshop in Moesia Inferior is best demonstrated by the treasure from the village of Golyama Brestnitsa, Pleven district. The treasure is an interesting and rare monument (36). As is clear from the inscriptions on several of the vessels, a Roman *beneficiarius* (a sergeant's rank), Flavius Maestrianus, ordered the treasure so that it could be dedicated to Pyrmeroulas — an epithet of the Thracian Hero-Horseman, the most worshipped deity in Thrace. The treasure consists of a large cylindrical vessel and five casseroles. It is of a relatively crude provincial workmanship (case 5) and it was evidently used in some Thracian sanctuary in the area.

Thracian religion, full of enigmas and mysticism, of which there are few monuments from the period before the Roman conquest, has left an enormous number of relics, made mainly of stone and bronze from the period of Roman rule. No other Roman Provinces in Europe have preserved more votive reliefs and statues of deities than the Bulgarian lands. In the ancient Thracian sanctuaries there were small-sized reliefs which the believers offered as gifts to the various deities. More than 2,000 of them depict the most revered Thracian deity — the Thracian Heros, shown as a hunting god. He is on horseback, his right hand is usually shown throwing a spear and the left hand is holding a shield behind the horse's head. In many of the reliefs he is moving towards a tree around which a serpent has often twined itself. A veiled woman is sometimes standing under the branches of that tree, either accepting or offering libations on an altar; a servant is holding on to the horse's tail (Cases 1-3). This strange protector of hunting is often depicted killing a boar, deer or other game, aided by a dog or a lion. Sometimes he carries in his raised or lowered right hand the game he has killed. There is also a group of dogs or lions jumping around him.



37. Balsamarium featuring Antinous, bronze, Varna, second half of the 2nd century, height 31 cm

In several reliefs this god appears with three heads, which is the usual way of presenting the gods of the dead.

Other deities of Thracian origin which were worshipped in Thrace are Dionysos — depicted, however, with his accepted Greek iconography — and Zeus Zbelthiourdos (Case 1). The latter has a Thracian epithet. The remaining deities are common to the entire Eastern part of the Roman Empire. They are Zeus and Hera, the healing gods Asclepius, Hygieia and Telesphoros, the god of commerce Hermes and the popular goddess of hunting and chastity Artemis. Also very popular were the three goddesses of rain and fertility, who have no names and are known from the inscriptions dedicated to them as “the three nymphs”. They are depicted dancing and holding hands, either naked or dressed, using the iconography of the three graces which is well known in ancient art. A widely practiced cult in Thrace and Moesia was the cult to various Eastern deities: the Iranian god of the sun and of victory, Mithras, brought to the Thracian lands by soldiers of Eastern descent, the Phrygian god Sabasius was the Egyptian god Serapis, which merged with the Greek Zeus and with Kybele, worshiped in the East, in Asia Minor and in many Greek colonies along the Thracian coast.

Sometimes the gods Apollo, Asclepius, Zeus, Dionysos, Ares and the Roman god of the forests Silvanus were presented as horsemen — an iconography which they do not possess in other countries. This was due to their merging with the Thracian Hero Horseman.

These votive reliefs have come from various Thracian sanctuaries situated in secluded places in the mountains or near large springs, but almost always outside the cities. There are sanctuaries, such as the one near the Glava Panega springs, where 200-300 reliefs of various deities have been found. Bronze statuettes are a less frequent find in the sanctuaries. Here, too, the Thracian horseman is among the most popular deities. However, most of the bronze statuettes were used to adorn the dwelling where they were found. This explains the fact that the deities most widely depicted as bronze figures were the deities who do not appear frequently on votive reliefs: the goddess of love Aphrodite and the god of commerce Hermes. Finally, Apollo is very often depicted as a rider carrying a quiver with arrows on his back. Bronze statuettes satisfied the tastes of another part of Thracian society, which was often more demanding of the sculptor than the purchasers of the votive reliefs. The bronze statuettes of the deities were produced in the same workshops in which chariots and furniture ornaments were made.

The moulds from Razgrad hold a special place among the bronze objects, although they cannot be dated with certainty. On their face side they have images of deities (Case 4). Some of these deities are well known to us from votive tablets as well, e.g. Zeus, Hera, Artemis and Kybele. However, there are among them also deities or iconographic types which were not known during Roman rule. Thus, for example, Kybele (34) is depicted with a wide *kalathos* (a hat resembling a basket) on his head, Sabasius is shown as a horseman (35) and there is a mysterious image of the Cappadocian goddess Ma. The entire group consisting of seventeen moulds which were probably used to make silver plates with the images of these deities show links with the religion of Asia Minor and it is perhaps older than assumed.

If religion contributed to the existence of sculpture by offering the deities votive reliefs with their images, the cult of the dead also played a very important role in its development. City necropoli situated along the roads leading out of the cities were filled with gravestones placed over the graves of wealthier citizens. These were usually reliefs or statues. While conventional subjects were most common in the eastern areas of Bulgaria, portraits prevailed in the western areas. One conventional presentation found mainly in the Greek colonies shows the dead woman seated on a chair and dates from pre-Roman times. The man was depicted in a complicated scene known as the “funeral feast”. Lying on his side on the couch propped up on his elbow, he takes his food from a tripod placed in front of him. His wife is seated next to him on a chair. This was common in earlier times in the Bulgarian lands as the Kazanluk tomb shows, which dates from the 4th century BC.



38. Head of Athena, marble, village of Golebina, Silistra district, 2nd century, height 33 cm

In Western Bulgaria Roman portraits were presented on the steles either as full-length figures one next to the other, or as heads in relief. The images or the portraits were arranged one next to the other and sometimes belonged to a whole family.

Round sculpture was also widely used for portrait-statues on the graves of men and women, and for images of deities. One of the statues of deities worth mentioning is a head of Pan, found in Stara Zagora (Case 2). The artist has portrayed with great skill the animal in the image of this deity who was the protector of wild nature (33). Older Hellenistic traditions in sculpture are represented by Athena's head (between Cases 4 and 5), which is a copy of a better pre-Roman original (38). As for grave-stone sculpture, the unfinished statue from Loukovit is perhaps the best illustration of the skilled workmanship of the local artists. The clothing on the body of the statue is shown in the minutest detail (between Cases 4 and 5). The head however, is presented only as a general form. Only the hairstyle is detailed, because it was a fashionable motif at that time. The characteristic features of the face: nose, mouth, eyes and ears are not clearly formed. Evidently the sculptor was waiting for an order before adding the required details to the face. This means that production was quick and organized. This was the usual way in which the numerous statues were produced during the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

Great changes took place in art towards the end of the pagan era. It is known that towards the end of the 3rd and especially at the beginning of the 4th century there was a return to the early sculpture of the 1st and the beginning of the 2nd centuries. This was accompanied however, by new trends, especially in non-religious sculpture. A typical example of these trends is the head of Emperor Diocletian, if it is indeed his portrait (between Cases 7 and 9). This portrait shows, on the one hand, realism bordering on naturalism in the shape of the face, the wrinkles on the forehead and the hairstyle. On the other hand, however, the portrait reveals a certain stylization. The beard is shown in strands, represented by simple circles.

Pagan religion in Antiquity was one of the important motivating forces which constantly pushed forward the evolution of art. This is also true of the entire Mediterranean region of which the Bulgarian lands are an inseparable part. It can even be said that it played an even more important role in Bulgarian lands during Roman rule. Images of deities and semi-gods adorned the squares, parks, houses and graves. They were found on the chariots, on the furniture and on the ornaments. They had long before ceased to be exclusive to the temples and sanctuaries and had become an inseparable background to man's life during Antiquity. Gems and cameos appeared during this epoch, even on gold ornaments (Case 5) which were sometimes heavy and crude, and sometimes light and fine. Made of semi-precious stones, they often showed heads and entire figures of deities, and were the work of excellent engravers. A glance shows them to be the work of local artists. The portrait also occurred sometimes on glyptic works.

The number of exhibits from the period of Roman rule in the Bulgarian lands, which was extremely rich in monuments is not very large. The picture of the development of the material and spiritual culture of the period is therefore a limited one. The number of exhibits from the subsequent period when Christianity replaced paganism is even smaller.

The adoption of Christianity during the first years of the 4th century and its transformation into the sole official religion had the same effect in the Bulgarian lands as in the rest of the Mediterranean world. At the same time Constantine the Great (306-337 AD) transformed the old Greek colony Byzantium into a second state-centre of the Roman Empire. The new Rome, Constantinople, was one of the most important cities in Thrace. However, this took place when the economic crisis in the Roman Empire resulted in its being broken up into two parts — the Eastern and the Western Roman Empire. As a result the country was divided into numerous small provinces which fell into two large areas: Diocese Thracia which again included Moesia Inferior and Illyricus, an area which covered the entire western part of the Balkan Peninsula with the Strouma valley and the lands to the west of the Isker river. As early as 279 AD the



39. Head of Emperor Gordianus (235-238 AD), bronze, village of Nikyup, Veliko Turnovo district, height 36 cm

Romans were forced to withdraw their troops as well as the settlers in Dacia, in the lands to the south of the Danube so that the two new areas lay on the boundary.

The impoverishment of the population, the decline of the city's autonomy, the intensification of the social differences, the depriving of the craftsmen's unions of their freedom and the constant price adjustments introduced by the state, gradually transformed the Eastern Roman Empire into a territory where everything depended on the central rule, on the capital, on the Emperor. The administration, doubled by the Church administration, brought the entire territory of the Empire under its control. Gold and silver decreased and began to disappear from the market, while bronze coins with fixed exchange rate became the main means of payment.

In addition to all these factors, an external factor — Barbarian incursions — began to play an ever increasing role in the crisis. After starting in the 3rd century, these incursions expanded in the 4th century. The Goths invaded the Balkan provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire and settled in many places, causing great destruction throughout the Peninsula. From the middle of the 5th century onward the Huns and the Bulgarians came. Groups of them settled, similar to the Goths, in Thrace and Illyricum and acquired the rights of federates. This type of allies were allowed to live according to their own traditions as a free population, but

40



40. Lamp with a cross, bronze, village of German, Sofia district, 4th-5th century, length 12.5 cm

41. Ceramic painted icon of St Theodor, Preslav, Patleina locality, 9th-10th century, 55 cm high



in exchange they were obliged to guard the Empire. The situation became even more difficult after the first quarter of the 4th century, when the Slavs appeared along the Danube.

The cities could not afford to maintain their fortifications themselves and during Justinian's rule the central power was entrusted with this task. The state did not have enough means to maintain a sufficiently strong army to defend its borders. This is why, a large part of the population was forced to flee towards the safer interior of the country. All this led to a gradual decline.

The introduction of Christianity with its martyrs and ascetism which replaced the vital and festive pagan religion with its numerous deities deprived art and the creative crafts of their traditional images and forms. A more austere and poorer way of life set in. The only concerns of most people were to find enough to eat and to survive. Under the circumstances is it astonishing that the entire culture acquired much coarser and heavier forms? In the period between the 4th and the 7th centuries, when the Bulgarian State was founded and when the Slavs settled on the Balkan Peninsula, there was everything that had existed before. However, everything reflected the limited purchasing power of a population that was becoming poorer and poorer. The state authorities, too, did not possess the enormous possibilities of the Roman Empire from the time between the 1st and 2nd centuries.



Medieval Bulgarian State

First Bulgarian State (7th-11th century)

Second Bulgarian State (12th-14th century)

Some of the most representative monuments showing the greatest achievements and the contribution of Medieval Bulgarian culture to the general development of European culture and world cultural heritage are exhibited in the central hall.

Shown here are inscriptions on columns which constitute some of the most remarkable monuments of early Bulgarian culture. The visitor can see the column from Sjulemankjoi (now Sechishtë) with a treaty inscribed on it, the column from Kaspichan, Shoumen district, the inscription on the establishment of an *aul* (a settlement) at Chatalar (now the village of Tsar Kroum), dating from the reign of Khan Omourtag, Khan Kroum's dedicatory inscription from Malomirovo. The inscription on an impressive column in the Church of the Forty Holy Martyrs in Turnovo, dating from Khan Omourtag's reign stands out with its profound philosophical text: "...Man, even if he lives well, dies, and another is born. May he, born in later times, when he sees this inscription recall him, who had it engraved. And the name of the archontes (ruler) is Omourtag, Khan Juvigi".

These columns constitute a sui generis official archive of the Khan's seat of government up to the middle of the 9th century, commemorating great events and great men. The inscription in Proto-Bulgarian with Greek letters refers to the conclusion of peace treaties and the commencement of war with Byzantium, the construction of fortifications, palaces, the death of warriors, and a number of inscriptions are inventories of weapons. A total of 98 inscriptions from the time of Khan Omourtag have been preserved.

The sculpture of a lion, also from the same period, one of few monuments of stone plastic art, referred to in the Chatalar inscription is also exhibited.

Examples of sculptural ornaments from the second half of the 9th century and the 10th century are also exhibited in the central hall: capitals (42), cornices, friezes, all of them with a wealth of original floral motifs and figures of animals originating from churches from Preslav, as well as red sandstone altar plates with figures of a lion, a gryphon, a peacock and a two-headed eagle from Stara Zagora district (43).

Six small painted ceramic icons (9th-10th century) found at the monastery in the Touzhaluka locality are remarkable works of art. The Evangelist Marko, the Apostle Toma, the Apostle Yacov, the Apostle Filip, Louka the Evangelist and a relief of the Crucifixion belong to this collection. In their subject matter the images are drawn from 10th century East Orthodox Christian art. The icons are remarkable for their large scale general composition. The delineation and presentation is clear, in a gamut of pastel colours. The generalized silhouette is represented through expressive lines, the gestures are refined and the faces radiate calm.

The marble relief images from the Second Bulgarian State — the icon the Virgin Oranta (12th-13th century), the relief "The Blessing of Christ (12th-13th century) from Nessebur (44) and the Angel (13th-14th century) from Tsarevets in Turnovo, drawn in accordance with the canon, are evidence of the continuation of old traditions in decorative church architecture.

Two examples of 14th century woodcuts are also on show. One is a throne with openwork woodcarving and inlaid ivory, attributed according to tradition to Stefan Dragovol, the feudal overlord of the lands along the upper reaches of the Strouma river, known as Hrelyu, who had ordered the building of the Rila Monastery at its present site and the erection of a tower bearing his name. The second is a door with various fantastic and realistic gryphons and lions carved in rectangular panels, a variety of motifs of openwork carving; the door is also attributed to Hrelyu, who donated it to the Church of the Rila Monastery (45).

The exposition in Room 5 is devoted to Bulgarian Medieval Art during the 7th-11th century. The development of Bulgarian art up to the middle of the 9th century was a continuous and complex process, part of the transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages and incorporating the cultural traditions of the Proto-Bulgarians, the Slavs and the local population. The formation of a unified Bulgarian culture between the 9th and the 11th



42

century with all its manifestations — secular and religious architecture, art, sculpture, applied art — resulted in a considerable and original artistic expression. This culture was characterized by the lasting affiliation of Bulgaria to the creative achievements of Eastern Christian culture and art, which contributed to their development and hence its significance for European culture.

Early Bulgarian art represented by goldsmith's artifacts indicates the means and the taste of the ruling Proto-Bulgarian aristocracy, and also shows the way of life of the Bulgarians and the creative genius of Bulgarian artisans.

42. Capital with vine leaves, marble, Preslav, 10th century, 55 cm high

43. Slabstone featuring a lion, red slate, Stara Zagora, 10th-11th century, 97 cm wide



Case 1-4 contains gold belt ornaments. Known from historical sources and miniatures, the fine ornaments were worn as an insignia of military and civilian hierarchy in Bulgarian society. The gold belt ornament (7th century) found at Akalan, Turkey, consists of five leather straps, decorated with lily blossoms. The gold belt ornaments from the village of Vetren, Silistra district (8th-9th century) is remarkable for its artistry. Its semi-oval shape, flanked by large golden pearls and an oval garnet produce a striking harmony. The Madara belt ornament — a second of its kind (8th century) — was found in the grave of a warrior, interred together with his horse. It consists of twelve gold objects; the exquisite ends and two round applications are decorated with fine palmettes made in the Byzantine faceted enamel style (46) and are finely executed. A belt from the middle of the 9th century, found in sarcophagus No 4 at the big Basilica in Pliska, consists of a gold buckle and ornaments in relief. Two bronze pendants, fragments of a knife and parts of a leather belt were also found in the sarcophagus.

Some elements of the golden buckle and the applications resemble the first Madara ornament although they are older.

Case 5 contains a small collection of bronze belt buckles and applications (9th-10th century); a buckle with the image of a lion from Pliska; a pegasus from the village of Odartsi, Tolbukhin district; an openwork



buckle with a relief image of a gryphon from Preslav; two openwork applications with figures of gryphons, one of them from Preslav with graphically modelled details of the figure, and the other from the Kroumovo Kalé locality, Turgovishtë district; and an original bronze key (9th-10th century) from Pliska, in the shape of a human figure, playing the lute.

Case 6 contains a gold cross — an encolpion, consisting of two gold crosses and an inlaid wooden cross (47). Depicted on the obverse side of the outer cross are scenes of church feasts: Annunciation, Nativity, Candlemas, Baptism, and Transfiguration — in the centre, while Descent into Hell and Ascension appear on the reverse. The Crucifixion appears on the obverse of the second cross together with the Virgin Nikopea, and the church fathers John Chrysostomos, Grigorii, Vassilii and Nikolai, on the reverse. The third cross, made of wood, has an inlaid bone and the exquisitely engraved figures are filled with enamel. The first two crosses were made of 22 carat gold in Constantinople during the 9th century or the beginning of the 10th century.

Preslav became an art centre which played an exceptional role in the history of European art with its monumental architecture, a wealth of sculptural ornamentation, and works of finely painted ceramic tiles and goldsmiths' artifacts

Stone sculpture was an interesting phenomenon in Medieval Bulgarian culture. The art of stone sculpture flourished, following the general trends in Eastern Byzantine sculpture, and skilfully recreated traditional ancient motifs and shapes. Later original monuments in new styles emerged with a new content and highly effective decorative motifs, where one feels the force of a popular stream of Bulgarian art — monuments which stand out among contemporary Byzantine works.

Cornices, friezes, corbels, capitals, limestone and marble heads were used in the internal and external ornaments of important buildings. The most frequent decorative elements were cornices with a classical torus or compositions of classical denticules and "wolf's teeth", which appear later in Romanesque architecture, with alternating heart-shaped leaves and palmettes in a variety of shapes, some of them painted in brick red, the colour enhancing their effect. Samples of these ornamental patterns are shown on the central wall.

Marble tiles from the Preslav Palace, covered with alternating compositions of geometrical and floral motifs (multileaved palmettes and semi-palmettes) are an interesting example of sculptural ornamentation. Three exhibits: a console with the image of a duck; part of a door frame with the figure of gryphon (an animal creature with the body of a lion, bent wings and the head of a bird); a relief and plaster capital with the image of a bird and a floral ornament are among the first animal images of their kind in Europe and constitute a new element in architectural decoration. The three dimensional animal figures from Monastery Church No 1 in the Avradaka locality are remarkable original works in the style of the Preslav school of sculpture. Later this type of decoration, not to be found in Byzantine art, was adopted by Romanesque architecture towards the end of the 11th and the beginning of the 12th century. Strongly expressive is the head of a monkey, done in a stylized, yet lively and realistic manner. The head of a lioness, carved with much imagination serves as a gargoyle.

The eyebrows and the mane are coloured in red paste which also outlines the large eyes giving them a life-like expression.

44. Christ Giving His Blessing, marble, Nessebur, 12th-13th century, 109 cm high



Icon-painting at the Preslav workshops reached its height in powerful and expressive works — proof of the great achievements in this field. Ceramic icons from the Preslav workshops are the oldest examples of Bulgarian art.

Case 7 contains the Crucifixion — an icon in relief from the 9th-10th century; the figures of Mary and St John, slightly inclined on either side of the cross.

Case 8 contains items made of bone from the 10th to the 12th century. Part of a relief icon of ivory is of special interest. It was found at Trapezitsa in Turnovo, and is preserved in part. The seven figures are probably from the scene of the Assumption of the Virgin. Part of the triptych with the images of St Nicholas and St John Chrysostomos in relief is also shown here.

Zhupan Sivin's silver cup from Preslav is a valuable original object of historical interest for its decorative plant motif and a six-line inscription in Greek at the bottom, running as follows: "Lord, help Sivin, the great Zhupan of Bulgaria." It is exhibited in case 9.

A collection of miniature sculptures is shown in case 10.

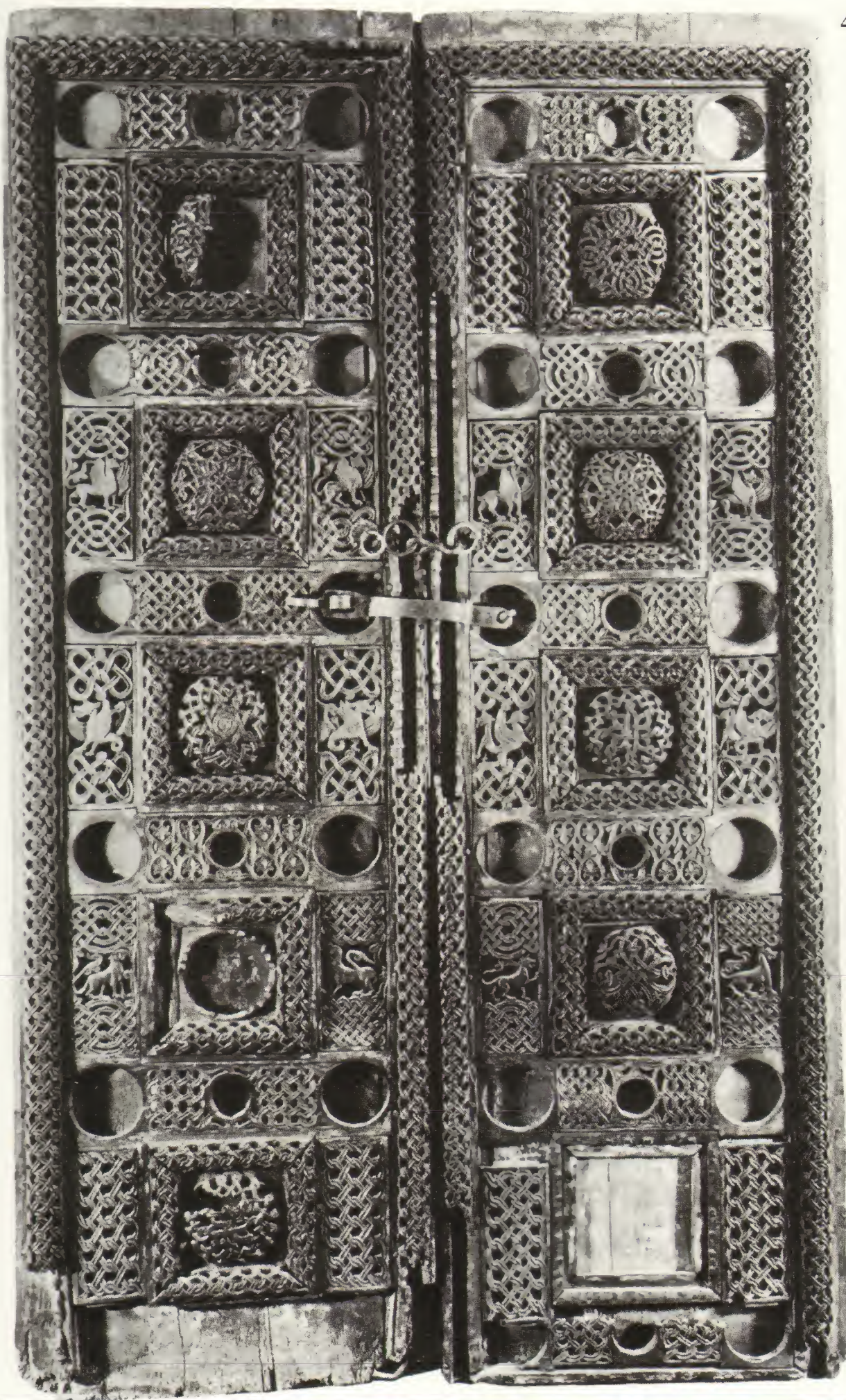
The Preslav Gold Treasure from the end of the 9th century and the early 10th century, discovered 3-4 km northwest of the palace centre of Preslav in the Kastana locality, is on show in the middle of the room (case 11). The treasure was concealed in a stone oven of a dugout dwelling, placed in a wooden box, of which only the silver-plated bronze facings have remained. The Byzantine coins it contained from the time of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos and Romanus II (945—959) indicate that the treasure was probably buried during the capture of Preslav by John I Teimiskes in 971. The treasure comprise over 150 gold and gilded ornaments and other valuables.

The golden plates of a diadem with fine multi-coloured and exquisitely executed ornaments using the faceted Byzantine enamel technique are the most impressive objects of the treasure. The scene "The Ascent of Alexander the Great to the Heavens", depicted on the central plate was a popular subject during the Middle Ages (48). Alexander is shown with a pearl-decorated crown, in imperial vestments, and in a chariot drawn by gryphons. The remaining three plates feature winged lions, dog-like birds and eagle-headed gryphons. In its structure the Preslav diadem has much in common with ancient Russian diadems.

There is an exquisite two-sided gold necklace with faceted enamel decoration in green, blue, red, yellow and white, with pearls, mountain crystal, and glass (49). It consists of seven trapeze shaped plates, attached to one another while leaf-shaped pearl-decorated medallions hang on fine short chains from the plates, alongside pendants of pearls and mountain crystal. Birds and palmettes are depicted on the plates and the medallions, and the Virgin Oranta is depicted on the central plates. The Virgin's oval face, small nose and open lips lend the face an expression of extraordinary charm. This image of the Virgin is alien to the Byzantine iconographic tradition, and points to the hand of a master goldsmith who was clearly familiar with early examples of Christian art from Syria, Egypt, Asia Minor, Palestine and Constantinople.

The three massive gold medallions, probably part of a necklace richly decorated with concentrically arranged silver coloured pearls, amethysts and emeralds, are spectacular works of art. Eight fluted golden beads and over ten spherical, bi-conical and spindle-shaped pendants adorn the necklace. The earrings (55) also stand out with their fine shape and rich ornamentation: an arc-shaped cassette with ornaments on both sides consisting of faceted enamel, a winding bunch of grapes, palmettes, rosettes, peacocks and running dogs; openwork with pearls arranged in circles and semi-circles; fine cassettes decorated with pearls and filled in with filigree ornaments, together with inlaid emeralds, amethysts, and pendants of pearls. It is difficult to establish the functions of the numerous bronze gilded applications. Some may have been belt ornaments and the others applications on rich garments.

The gilded pentagonal silver sculpture with a scene of the "Tree of Life" in relief is particularly interesting. It features two peacocks, facing each other in front of a large vessel. The scene (peacocks as the symbol of immortality, are drinking from a communion chalice or are pecking



45. A gate from the Church of the feudal ruler Hrelyu, woodcut, Rila Monastery, 14th century, 211 cm high

fruit) is done clearly in the spirit of early Christian symbolism. Two rings, one of them with an intaglio with the figure of Hermes, and two pendants with ornaments of enamel, are also part of the treasure.

The type of ornament, the workmanship of the diadem and the double necklace of the Preslav Treasure, point to the hand of a master goldsmiths from a local workshop. They rank among the finest works of early Medieval Bulgarian art.

Room 6 is devoted to the history-making work of Cyril and Methodius and to Medieval Bulgarian Literature.

The Slavs and the Proto-Bulgarians who settled on the Balkan Peninsula during the 6th and 7th centuries had various runes, consisting of "lines and notches", as Chernorizets Hrabur, the eminent man of letters (9th-10th century) described them. These signs, which have not yet been deciphered, were probably a Proto-Bulgarian runic script, similar to the Orhon-Enisei Turkic runic script. These runes appear on vessels, bricks, tiles, stone blocks, in early Medieval Bulgarian settlements and necropolises on the territory of Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia and the USSR. The linking of such runes into complete inscriptions in some monuments seems to show that they constituted a primitive graphic system used by the Slavs and the Proto-Bulgarians before the creation of Slav letters and literature in Bulgaria.

A seven leafed bronze rosette from Pliska (9th century) is especially interesting. Two characters, probably part of a text, make up a runic inscription which has not yet been deciphered. However, the view has been put forth that the runic text had a religious, magic meaning. The familiar Old Bulgarian sign IYI carved out on the rosette, considered to have been an apotropaic sign (case 2) also appears on pagan amulets. Two more objects with such signs — a block with carved runic signs from Byala, Varna district (8th-9th century), (pedestal I) and a gold ring from Vidin (9th-10th century) are also on show. A sign considered to have been that of a clan, or some kind of a charm (case 1) is carved out on the oblique side of the plate.

In 681 the newly created Bulgarian state felt the pressing need of a script of its own to ensure its political and cultural consolidation. Greek and the Greek alphabet were introduced at an early stage at the Court under the influence of neighbouring Byzantium, a country with which Bulgaria maintained regular contacts. A large number of stone inscriptions were made during the 8th-9th century, some of which are exhibited in the central hall. As unique phenomena, these inscriptions are the most important achievements in the cultural and literary history of Bulgaria. With their historic and chronological content they make up the "stone archives" of Bulgaria which mark the beginning of the written and literary traditions of the country.

Attempts were made to adapt the Greek graphic system to the phonetic system of the Turkic language of the Proto-Bulgarians and the transcription of Slav words with Greek letters. This is evident in some inscriptions from the first half of the 9th century.

After the adoption of Christianity (865) Greek and the Greek script became part of church life and the liturgy. (The inscription about the conversion to Christianity of Prince Boris I and the Bulgarian people found at Balshi (Room 18), and the silver cup of Zhupan Sivin, exhibited in Room 5 are in Greek).

The adoption of Christianity created an acute need for a kind of alphabet suited to the language of the Bulgarian people for the consolidation

46. Belt ornaments, gold, enamel, Madara, Shoumen district, 9th century

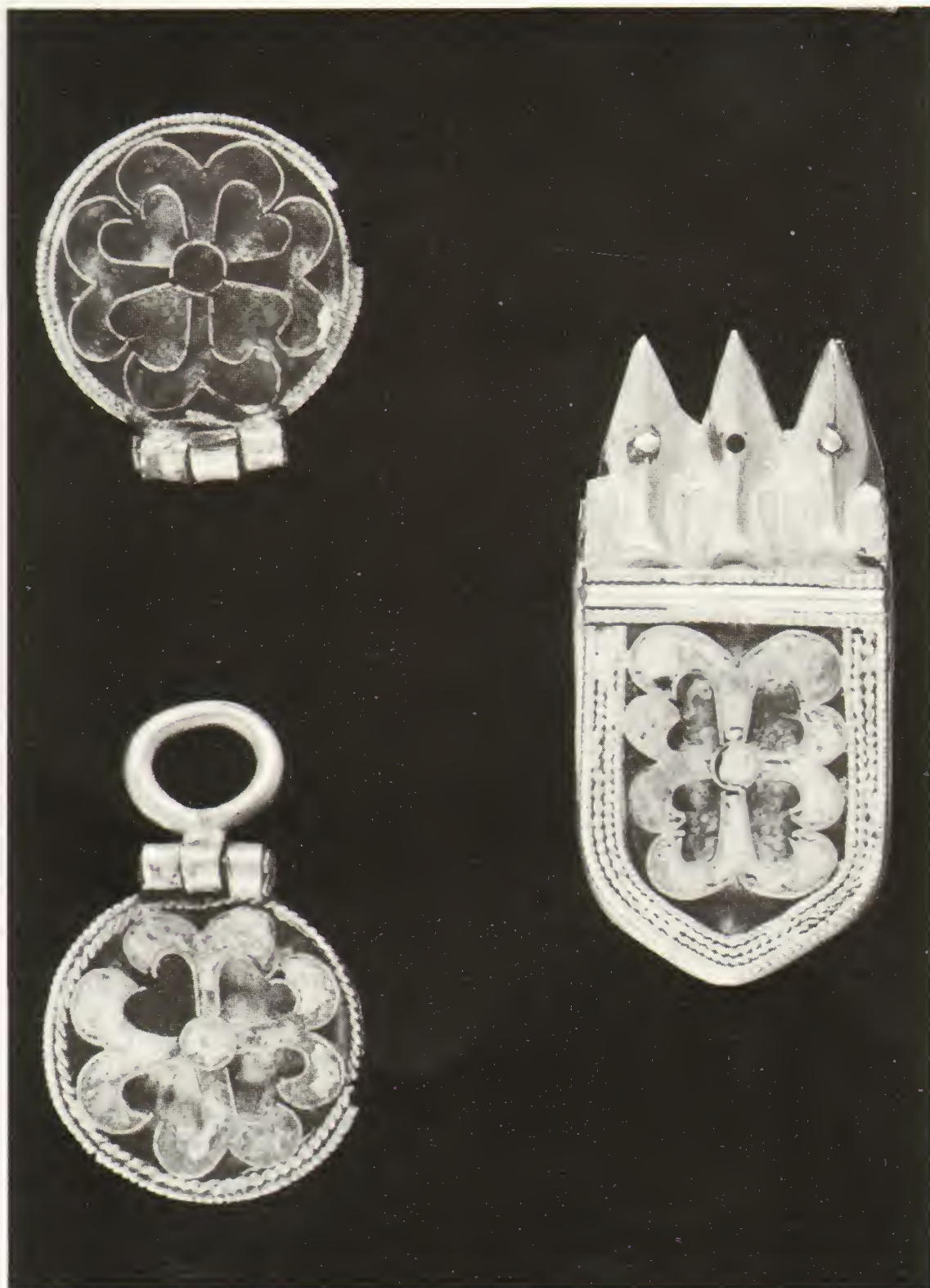
of the state, struggling against the growing influence of foreign culture and foreign political influence. The historical turning point in the overall cultural life of the country set in with the introduction of Slav letters and the adoption of the Slave language as the official language of the state. The beginnings of Slav literature are connected with the names of the two brothers from Salonica, Constantine-Cyril, called the Philosopher for his erudition, and Methodius. In 855 Constantine, the Philosopher created the Glagolitic graphic system consisting of 38 letters, based on the Greek cursive script. This original alphabet is the first Slav phonetic script, which took into account the specific features of the Bulgarian language of the mid-ninth century.

Table 1 shows Cyril, the Philosopher, a mural from Berende (a copy), 14th century.

None of Cyril, the Philosopher's and Methodius' works have been preserved. Case 17 contains the "Extended Life of Cyril, the Philosopher" and the "Eulogy of Cyril and Methodius" from a later 15th century copy of the *Panegyric*, an encyclopaedic work by Vladislav Grammatik.

After the death of Cyril and Methodius Slav alphabet was taken to Bulgaria by their closest disciples. Large literary schools flourished in Preslav and Ohrid.

Case 4 contains the only Glagolitic monument in Bulgaria — the Rila



Glagolitic sheets from the 11th century (51). They contain parts of the Perenesis of Efrem Sirin and part of a confessional prayer which has common features with the literary activities of Clement of Ohrid.

A new graphic system, named after the great Slav enlightener, the Cyrillic alphabet, appeared towards the end of the 9th century in Bulgaria and gradually spread throughout the 9th and the 11th century replacing the Glagolitic alphabet and eventually becoming the official state alphabet used in a modified form by different countries and nations to the present day. The use of the Byzantine alphabetical numeration and the system of numerals also contributed to the consolidation of the Cyrillic alphabet.

Monasteries in the capital and the vicinity played an important role in the promotion of literature and Bulgarian culture. Outstanding and talented writers who drew on a rich Byzantine literary heritage, created original works in a variety of subjects and genres, both religious and secular. Classical Greek and Latin authors, as well as contemporary writers' works were copied and spread, together with liturgical works and secular books for the feudal aristocracy. Bulgaria became a centre for the development and advancement of Slav letters which later spread to Europe. Towards the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century Bulgarian literature flourished and is known as the Golden Age of Bulgarian literature. Prince Boris I and in particular Tsar Simeon the Great were patrons of letters.

The literary work of Clement of Ohrid, Constantine of Preslav, Presbyter Kozma and others played a major role in the formation and establishment of Old Bulgarian literature. John the Exarch is one of the outstanding authors known for a number of works. He was responsible for the reform in Bulgarian spelling and in liturgy. The significance of such works went beyond the confines of Bulgaria and reached distant Slav and non-Slav countries. This is the greatest contribution of Bulgaria to world civilization. Only a few manuscripts have been preserved from that period. The further development of Bulgarian literature can be traced from later copies from the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. An icon featuring Clement of Ohrid from the 14th century is shown in case 14.

Scribes were trained at scriptorium schools. Boxes covered with wax were used for writing. A box restored after a Russian model, and a stylus can be seen in case 7.

Ceramic tiles with Cyrillic texts, produced at the Preslav workshops for painted ceramics from the 9th-10th century (case 17) are of particular importance. They are the earliest preserved examples of Slav letters and through them we have an idea of the official regulations to do with the writing of the most important Byzantine manuscripts from the 9th and 10th century. Probably the same guide was used for books written and copied at the palaces of Tsar Simeon. The texts on the tiles, which are in fact with no start or finish, are evidence that the tiles made up complete texts, probably serving as teaching aids. The seal of Georgi, Bulgarian councillor and a high dignitary in the Bulgarian Church, dated from the end of the 9th century, shown in Room 18, is the oldest monument in Cyrillic and comes from Preslav. The famous inscription from the middle of the 10th century also found in Preslav in the tomb of Mostich, the Churgubil, a high official at the Preslav court, high ranking military figure and diplomat, is shown here (52). This inscription is not only an important historical source but also an example of the official lapidary script (the so-called new "straightened" Old Bulgarian Cyrillic uncial).

A ceramic ring of a spindle (9th-10th century) with an inscription

47. Triple cross — gold, niello, Pliska, 9th-10th century, 4.2 cm high



“Lolin’s ring” is indicative of the level of literacy among commoners (case 2).

Traditionally Greek continued to be used together with the Slav language to the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century when Slav letters and literature began to flourish. The bi-lingual inscription of Anna, daughter of Prince Boris I, is evidence of this. It was discovered in Preslav and dated from the first half of the 10th century. A small cross with an inscription in the two languages is on shown in case 4.

During the period of Byzantine rule (11th-12th century) official Old Bulgarian literature came closer to the tastes and concepts of the common people, thus retaining its ethnic and popular character. A change in the style, content and decoration of Bulgarian books, intended above all for the needs of liturgy, set in. The Enin Apostle from the second half of the 11th century (a copy) was found in 1960 in the village of Enin, Kazanluk district. It probably originated in the Eastern Bulgarian lands. It is written in an archaic and characteristic Cyrillic script, decorated with original initials in blue and red, which indicates a link with the ornamentation of the Glagolitic manuscripts (case 5).

Case 18 contains a Triodium of the 11th century, a parchment sheet, written in small archaic Cyrillic lettering on palimpsest from an older Cyrillic manuscript with a marginal note in Glagolitic letters in the lower



48. Golden plates of a diadem featuring the scene “The Ascent of Alexander the Great to the Heavens” and mythical animals, enamel, Preslav Treasure, 9th-10th century, 5.4 cm high

margin. The Slepch Apostle of the second half of the 12th century (154 parchment sheets) is also here. This manuscript contains a selection of psalms and was written by two scribes in small Cyrillic lettering on palimpsest from a Greek manuscript with beautifully executed initials and decorated margins.

The Bitola Triodium from the second half of the 12th century (112 parchment sheets) is shown in case 19. It is written in archaic Cyrillic lettering, occasionally using Glagolitic letters. The Triodium has initials and horizontal interwoven decorative lines in the upper and lower margins. The manuscript is invaluable for its linguistic features. The Bitola Triodium also has many marginal notes which reflect the hard times when it was copied by Georgi Grammatik. The Triodium originated in the South-western Bulgarian lands.

Literary works flourished once more with the restoration of the Bulgarian state (1185). The new capital Turnovo with the monasteries in the vicinity became the centre of literary activities. Scriptoriums in the capital drew eminent, highly educated figures, the authors of considerable works. Above all liturgical works were copied here, translations were made of major works as well as compilations of new works in original genres, thus to a certain extent restoring the literary heritage of the 9th and 10th centuries. Medieval Bulgarian manuscripts both with a secular and reli-



48

gious content had illuminations, miniatures with life-like compositions of human figures, done in a fresh and vivid gamut, exquisitely drawn, and varied in their floral ornaments, with vignettes in the initials, combined with zoomorphic motifs. They were also written in three different prints — the uncial (a precise, carefully written letter), semi-uncial (a simpler one with ornamental lettering) and shorthand (a simple script, with some letters left out).

During the 13th century Bulgarian literature developed along more independent lines and the Byzantine tradition began to fall off. Lives of Saints and Bulgarian hymnographic works were copied, and compiled with a special interest in the lives of Bulgarian saints and other Christian saints, such as St Ivan of Rila, one of the most popular saints. A marked patriotic spirit began to appear in Bulgarian literature.

The Banitsa Tetraevangelia from the end of the 13th century (206 parchment sheets) is a valuable manuscript on show in case 23. It was written by Father John from the village of Banitsa, Vratsa district. Each Gospel begins with special initials and original ornamentation. The feast days of Bulgarian saints — St Petka of Turnovo, Cyril, the Philosopher and Methodius, Tsar Peter and Ivan of Rila are included here.

A copy of the Dobreisho Gospel (53) from the first half of the 13th century is on show in case 11. This exceptional linguistic work is also a

work of art richly decorated with intertwined ornaments, zoomorphic motifs and fine illuminations of the Evangelists. The image of Father Dobreisho, who copied it, appears in a miniature in the Gospel of St John and is particularly interesting.

The 13th century Izborno Evangelie (Collection of Psalms) consisting of 30 parchment sheets, with ornamented initials, together with another Collection of Psalms comprising 102 parchment sheets, with yellow and red initials in the Byzantine style can be seen in case 23.

Still another Izborno Evangelie (Collection of Psalms) of 31 parchment sheets is important from a linguistic point of view and as a major work of art and is shown in case 7. The Argir Triodium from the 13th century, consisting of 58 parchment sheets, is on show in case 9 near the wall. It is an important linguistic source connected with the Glagolitic script.

The famous Boyana Psalter from the 13th century, found in the course of restoration work in the Boyana Church, consisting of 115 sheets and written in small uncials can be seen in case 10.

The Balkan style, characterized by more complicated openwork motifs appeared towards the end of the 13th century. The Bulgarian manuscripts of Tetraevangelia (13th-14th century) with 171 parchment sheets are an example of this style. This illuminated manuscript has miniatures of the evangelists Marko and Luka, linear ornaments, and small initials, drawn in this style (case 12).

Bulgarian literature flourished most during the 14th century, a period comparable only with the flourishing of Old Bulgarian literature during the reign of Simeon the Great. Patronized generously by Tsar Ivan Alexander, Bulgarian literature reached its greatest variety in genre and artistic achievement. Books preserved from the library of this Bulgarian ruler remain works of art of world renown. Turnovo became a leading centre of literary activities in Bulgaria and the rest of the Slav world. Literature of this period followed two principal trends — official literature, patronized by Tsar Ivan Alexander, serving the supreme authority, and unofficial (popular) needs consisting of apocryphal literature, stories and legends.

Hesychasm, which had come from Byzantium, exerted a strong influence on the development of Old Bulgarian literature and contributed to bringing Bulgarian and Byzantine literature closer together. The mystical-meditative Hesychastic philosophy found fertile ground and expression in the activities of the Turnovo literary school under its founder Theodosius of Turnovo and his successor Patriarch Evtimi. A variety of works of different themes were created during this period: liturgical works, prologi, miscellanies, chronicles, literary works, translations of dogmatic works in the struggle against heresies, and short stories with a heroic historical and moralizing content. Church and secular poetry also flourished with the emergence of a court panegyric style, praising Tsar Ivan Alexander, for example. New trends appeared in the development of Bulgarian and Slav literature.

Apocryphal and Bogomil literature, which reveals the worldview of the people, developed alongside official literature. In a powerful emotional and artistic style it touched upon problems ignored by the official literature. The widespread apocryphal literature which gave Bulgarian literature a social and popular character spread out to other Slav countries, and above all to Russia.

The early Bulgarian tradition was also productive, particularly during the reign of Tsar Ivan Alexander. Liturgical works, theological treatises and miscellanies were copied and translated, contributing to the appearance and further development of original works of high value during the second half of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century.

The Sofia Psalter (54) of 1337 consisting of 317 parchment sheets and also known as the Psalm Book of Tsar Alexander, copied at the king's order for personal use (case 20) is a manuscript of great scientific value. It is an explanatory psalter with a text in its archaic Old Bulgarian translation from the 9th-10th century. The poetic Eulogy of Tsar Ivan Alexander, added at the end is particularly important. The end of this Eulogy is a solemn hymn beginning in the characteristic style of liturgical poetic works, with the word "Rejoice!". The Psalter also contains prayers to the Lord and the royal family. This original manuscript is decorated with

geometric and floral motifs, and the austere outlines of the initials recall the Byzantine codex of the Comnenian period.

A copy of the London Gospel (The Tetraevangelia of Tsar Ivan Alexander), a manuscript of international significance, is also on show. It contains 366 fine miniatures showing various aspects of life in Bulgarian society, as well as a miniature portrait of Tsar Ivan Alexander and his family. Translated and copied in 1356, the London Gospel is an invaluable source for the study of the history of the Bulgarian language, prior to the spelling reform of Patriarch Evtimi.

A Miscellany (a collection of 16 sermons of Grigori the Theologian) consisting of 292 parchment sheets, another important linguistic and literary source, was also compiled during the reign of Tsar Alexander (case 13).

The *Enin Stihar* (224 parchment sheets) from the second half of the 14th century is also an invaluable literary work, it has floral and geometric ornaments. The text of the Greek liturgy for St Petka of Turnovo, translated during the reign of Tsar Ivan Alexander II, and the *Lestvitsa* (224 paper sheets) with few decorations, are also interesting monuments. This last contains the full text and the interesting scene of the steps with the virtues and the vices (case 21).

The Prologus from the second half of the 14th century, consisting of



49

49. Two-sided necklace featuring the Virgin Oranta, birds and palmettes, gold, enamel, pearls, Preslav Treasure, 9th-10th century, 10 cm in diameter

413 parchment sheets, is another interesting manuscript of the period. Included in it are the Brief Lives of Bulgarian saints — St Petka of Turnovo, Ilarion of Muglen and others. Of foremost importance is the Old Bulgarian story “The Miracle of St George with the Bulgarian” (case 20). One of the most important copies of the manuscript of the short novel “Barhalaam and Ioasaf” from the second half of the 14th century (270 sheets of paper, with modest ornaments), is also in case 20.

Fragments of official inscriptions on marble cornices found in Turnovo and Cherven; fragments of dinnertable ceramics with monograms and inscriptions, fragments with ligatures, among them those of Theodosi of Turnovo and Tsar Ivan Alexander, are also exhibited in case 15 and 24, together with graphiti on bricks and stone, cut out by commoners, which indicate the level of literacy in the country.

Two metal vessels from the 14th century, one of them a shallow bowl with an original inscription on a gilt band running “May he, who drinks be blessed 50 times”. The other, a silver spoon with an inscription “Vladimir’s spoon”, points to the custom of engraving the name of the owner. These are on show in case 16.

A remarkable marble tombstone with an engraved epitaph in verse, dating from the 15th century and found in Nessebur, is mounted on pedestal 2.

After the fall of Bulgaria under Ottoman rule the Bulgarian books spread far beyond the confines of Bulgaria, reaching to Russia and some countries in the west, a phenomenon known to scholars as the Second South Slav Impact.

Room 7 features monuments of Bulgarian Medieval Art (12th–14th century).

The restoration of the Bulgarian state towards the end of the 12th century resulted in a new flourishing of Bulgarian arts. Turnovo, the centre of political, economic and spiritual life in Bulgaria played a leading role in the development of architecture and the arts. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Calistus, tells of the Life of Theodosi of Turnovo, “...Turnovo is the town of the Bulgarian kings and is second only to Constantinople in words and deeds”.

A Bulgarian school of painting was established and in spite of the influence exerted by Byzantine art stood out with its original style and preserved lasting aesthetic values, national traditions and concepts.

The principal artistic trends during the first half of the 13th century can be traced in the scene “St Iliya in the Cave, Fed by a Raven” (55), from a fragment of a mural from the Church of the Forty Holy Martyrs, in Turnovo (1230), which belongs to a school of painting in line with the Comnenian style. The depiction of the life-like image of the saint brings out his noble features and moral purity, and is evidence of the skill and creative power of the artists who worked at Turnovo.

The murals in the Boyana Church (1259), the most representative monument of that period, are masterpieces of Bulgarian Medieval art. The life-like and vivid faces in the murals are striking. They are realistically rendered, bringing out the nobility of the characters and the skill in presenting their spirituality. The portraits of the donors, Sebastokrator Kalyoyan and his wife Desislava, as well as those of Tsar Assen and his queen Irina are finely drawn and full of expression. The gamut of colours is exquisite, the hues deep and subtle, the drawing precise and flexible. The Boyana murals point the new trends in portrait painting of that period and are the forerunners of pre-Renaissance use of new elements, char-

50. Earrings — ear-tabs, gold, pearls, Preslav Treasure, 9th-10th century, 12.3 cm long

acteristic of art during the 14th century. Copies of the murals of the Boyana Church are shown in the corridor in front of Room 19. New achievements (murals in the new Paleologian style) enriched Bulgarian culture during the 14th century and can be traced in the artistic expression of that time.

The earliest manifestation of the Paleologian style can be seen in the murals of Church No 11 at the Medieval town of Cherven. The image of John the Baptist, depicted in full length and featured as an angel in the desert together with an unknown saint, of an archangel and the Virgin with the infant (Fragment in case 9) point to the high artistic value of an exquisite art. The faces of saints, and in particular the face of the young Christ, probably from the scene "Christ with the Saints" from the church in the fortress of Ourvich, Sofia district (case 9 and 10) are the work of an outstanding painter.

The murals from the rock church of St Marina, near the village of Karloukovo, Lovech district are in the same style. Depicted here are St Marina Purifying the Possessed, God the Father, the Old Testament Trinity, the Sacrifice of Abraham (the cenral wall), an archangel and portraits of donors (the left wall).

The murals preserved in the rock church near the village of Ivanovo, Roussé district, the so-called "church" whose donor was Tsar Ivan Alex-



ander, are the best examples of the achievements of monumental art in the 14th century. The life-like tall figures with expressive gestures, painted in a light warm gamut, indicate the rise of the power of expression in art of that period. The composition, the landscape and the architectural background of the separate groups bear out typical ancient artistic features. Scenes from the life of Jesus, (copies in the corridor in front of Room 19) are exhibited here. A copy of the portrait of Tsar Ivan Alexander, painted between 1344 and 1363 in the narthex of the Bachkovo Ossuary is also shown here.

The murals in the Zemen Church and in Hrelyu's Tower in the Rila Monastery, monuments of Southern and South-western Bulgaria, are the only examples in Bulgaria representing a popular, or "anticlassical" trend in medieval mural painting and are noteworthy for their content and stylistic feature (the corridor next to Room 19).

New qualitative advances in icon painting occurred during the 13th and 14th centuries in Bulgaria and the entire Balkan Peninsula. However, much of the icons that have come down to us follow the earlier iconographic and stylistic models. They come out with a monumental sounding of the images, solemnity of the composition, and are close to the mural-painting style of the period. Mural painting in the 14th century is characterized by classical proportions, presentation of volume through form, refined lines, expressive gestures and bright combinations of colour schemes. Two fine icons with the image of the Virgin Odigitria and the Virgin Eleusa from Nessebur (56), shown in the museum, bear out those features. The icon with a silver repoussé cover and an inscription from the donor — Tsar Ivan Alexander's uncle — is a monument of historical importance (Table 1, case 7).

Case 1 contains small artistic reliefs of steatite, clay, and mother of pearl, done in various techniques and treating different subjects, which illustrate the development of miniature sculpture during the 12th-14th century. Features typical above all of Byzantine art can be discerned in the technology and stylistic principles. A mould for the production of relief icons from the 12th-13th century found in the village of Opaka, Turnovo district, shows the local production of similar works. The small steatite icons show an unknown warrior saint, St Dimiter, St George, St John the Theologian, one of the most popular subjects. The two-sided icon of St Dimiter found in the village of Chernomashtitsa, (now Yugoslavia) dates from the end of the 12th century or the early 13th century. St Dimiter is depicted with a drawn sword, a scabbard and a shield. The style and treatment of the details indicate a local workshop providing a close copy of the Byzantine model.

A set of twelve ceramic icons, decorations of a cross or an icon, are examples of miniature sculpture during the 14th century (case 1). They were unearthed during excavations of Church No 10 in Cherven. Well carved images of evangelists and prophets and the composition, the Ascension, the Pentecost, and the Entry into Jerusalem (a fragment) appear on these icons. A certain degree of individualization in the features and the expression is achieved, recalling familiar portraits from examples of Medieval iconographic models. The evangelical scenes were produced in moulds cut out in the Paliologian style when at its height. The icons were produced at a Bulgarian workshop as the names around the images are given in Cyrillic letters.

Case 8 contains three heads (one male and two female) in high relief from a composition found in Turnovo. These heads illustrate the state of sculpture during the 14th century. The female head (probably Mary Magdalen), and judging by the position of the hand, expressing grief, is the most interesting. There are grounds to suppose that the three heads come from the composition *The Passion of Christ*.

A model of Church No 5 (14th century), so far the only one of its kind found in Cherven, shows the building technique of the medieval master builders (case 6).

The artifacts of goldsmiths during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom point to skilled craftsmen working for patrons with a refined taste.

Case 2 displays a collection of fine gold signet rings. The name of their owner is engraved on top in the Western manner: "Hinat, the Sebast",

“Dobroslav’s Signet”, with a fleur-de-lis in the middle; “Vitomir’s Signet”, with the image of an eagle; “Besar’s Signet”, with the image of an eagle; “Hodor’s Signet”, with the images of two lion heads; “Peter, the Cup-bearer, a cousin of the King”, with two small lion heads on the side, and the monogram “Nicephoros” engraved on either side of the human figures with haloes.

Case 3 contains Tsar Kaloyan Signet Ring (1197-1207), found in 1972 in a grave during excavations in the Church of the Forty Holy Martyrs in Turnovo (57). Made of gold nugget, it weighs 61.15 gm. The image of a lion or a leopard is engraved on the top. The inscription “Kaloyan’s Signet” is engraved around it.

Goldsmiths’ artifacts, with exquisitely worked ornaments, combining various techniques — filigree, granulation, and enamel — are shown in case 4: a small treasure of five earrings and pendants, found in the village of Dubené, Karlovo region (13th-14th century) decorated with the figures of birds and stylized floral ornaments made of gold and gilt silver; a gold belt set (14th century) from the Palace of Tsarevets, Turnovo, with the image of a winged dragon on the buckle and a female figure at the end of the belt done in a West European style; a medallion with two gilt lions on dark red enamel in low relief; an application (14th century) with the image of an archangel in regal attire, from the village of Cherven, Rousse



51

district; an exquisite gold medallion (11th-12th century) with the bust relief of St Akepsimas, done in multicoloured faceted enamel; a gold reliquarium-icon (13th century) with the image of the Virgin in high relief from the town of Elena, Veliko Turnovo district, and to the side medallions with an inscription and a Greek cross on the reverse, all done against a dark blue enamel background (58).

The treasure of gold and silver ornaments and vessels found in 1971 near the town of Nikopol (cases 10, 11) is evidence of the high level of applied arts of that period. The name Balin is engraved on one of the spoons, probably the name of the owner, who buried the treasure in the 14th century when the town fell to the Ottoman conquerors. The gold earrings and pendants of double cone shape of spherical beads, both solid and with openwork, richly decorated with small granules and thin threads, making up fine ornaments are the most impressive objects of all (59). The two massive gold bracelets are made of round wire and are rounded off with triangular plates decorated with granules. The massive silver torques, worn around the neck as an ornament were also an insignia of nobility. Two torques (60) and the silver ornament, decorated with pendants, are finely made and richly decorated jewelry. Silver and spherical gilt buttons, some of them with flutes and with multi-coloured stones, set in leaf-shaped cups at the lower edge, are the last objects in this group.

The set of silver vessels consisting of an elegant cup and two shallow round bowls, one with an inscription engraved on it; the other one oval, gilded inside and richly decorated with floral motifs and animal ornaments, are also interesting objects. There are applications of different figures made up of variously coloured enamel at the bottom of the vessels. Two spoons with fine handles and lightly engraved inscriptions complete this display.

First Bulgarian State — 7th-11th Century

Major events occurred in the Balkan Peninsula during the 7th century. The Slavs settled between the Danube and the Balkan Range at the beginning of the 7th century and undermined the foundation of the political might and the slave system of the Byzantine Empire.

During the second half of the 7th century the Proto-Bulgarians of Turkic origin, led by Khan Asparoukh after occupying the lands beyond the Danube, won the right, through incessant raids, to settle in the Byzantine lands formerly occupied by the Thracian tribes. These two different ethnic groups were at a similar level of social and economic development and through their autonomy and territories were united against their common enemy Byzantium, forming a Bulgarian state in 681, the first lasting Medieval state in Eastern Europe. Their state became a rallying point for the Slavs of the Bulgarian group and played an important political role in the course of centuries, as a defender of the political and spiritual tradition of the East, and a balancing element in the relations between the states in South-eastern Europe.

Bulgaria consolidated its position as a political power and its economic position, gradually expanding its territory. A map shows the territorial changes in Bulgaria between the 7th and the 11th centuries under the khans Kroum and Omourtag, Prince Boris I and Tsar Simeon.

A copy of a Proto-Bulgarian inscription, in Greek, from Preslav is mounted on a base (second half of the 9th century). The inscription is

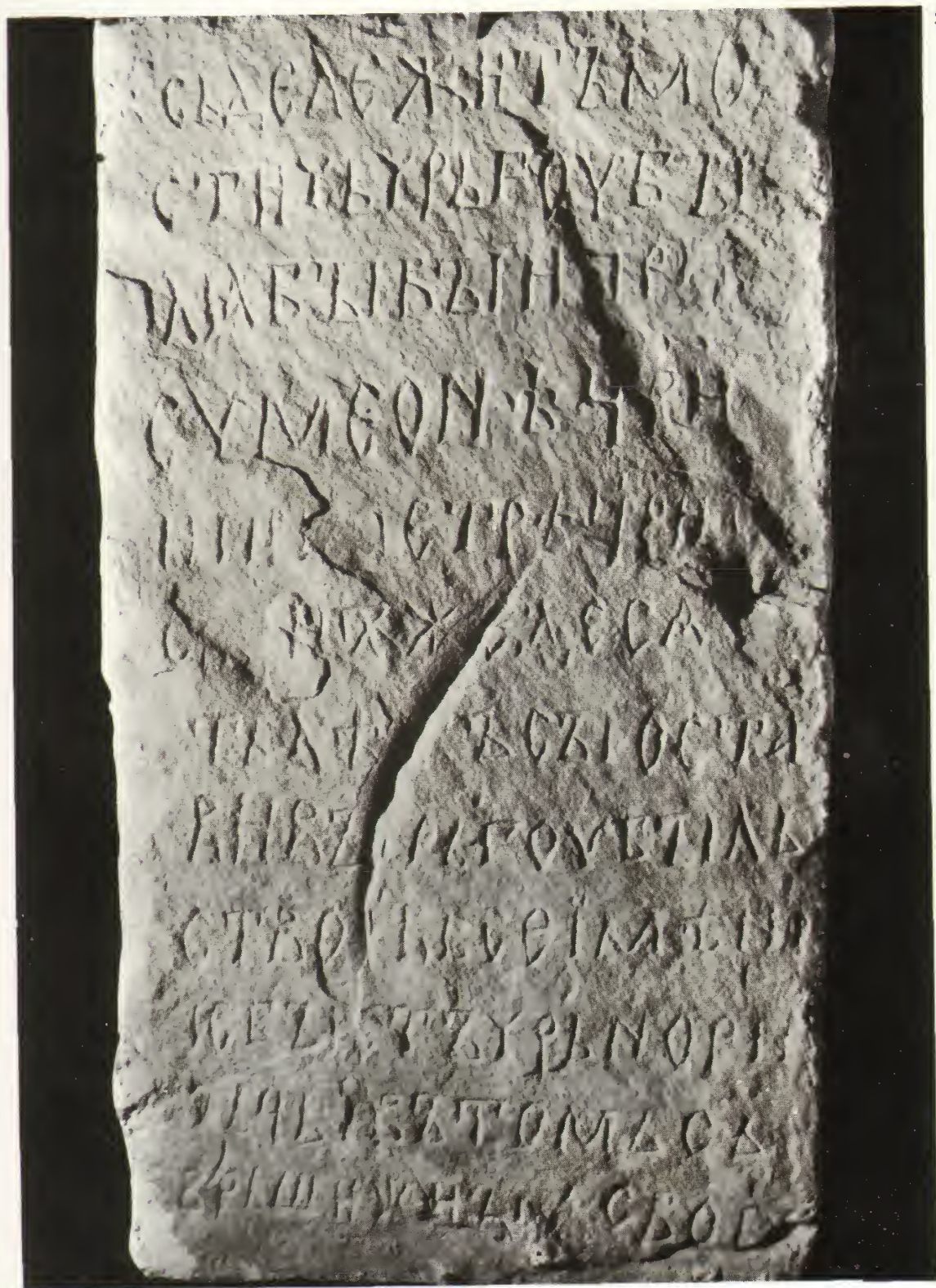
52. Tombstone inscription of Mostich, limestone, Preslav, 10th century, 102 cm high

an inventory of Bulgarian arms, allotted to different commanders.

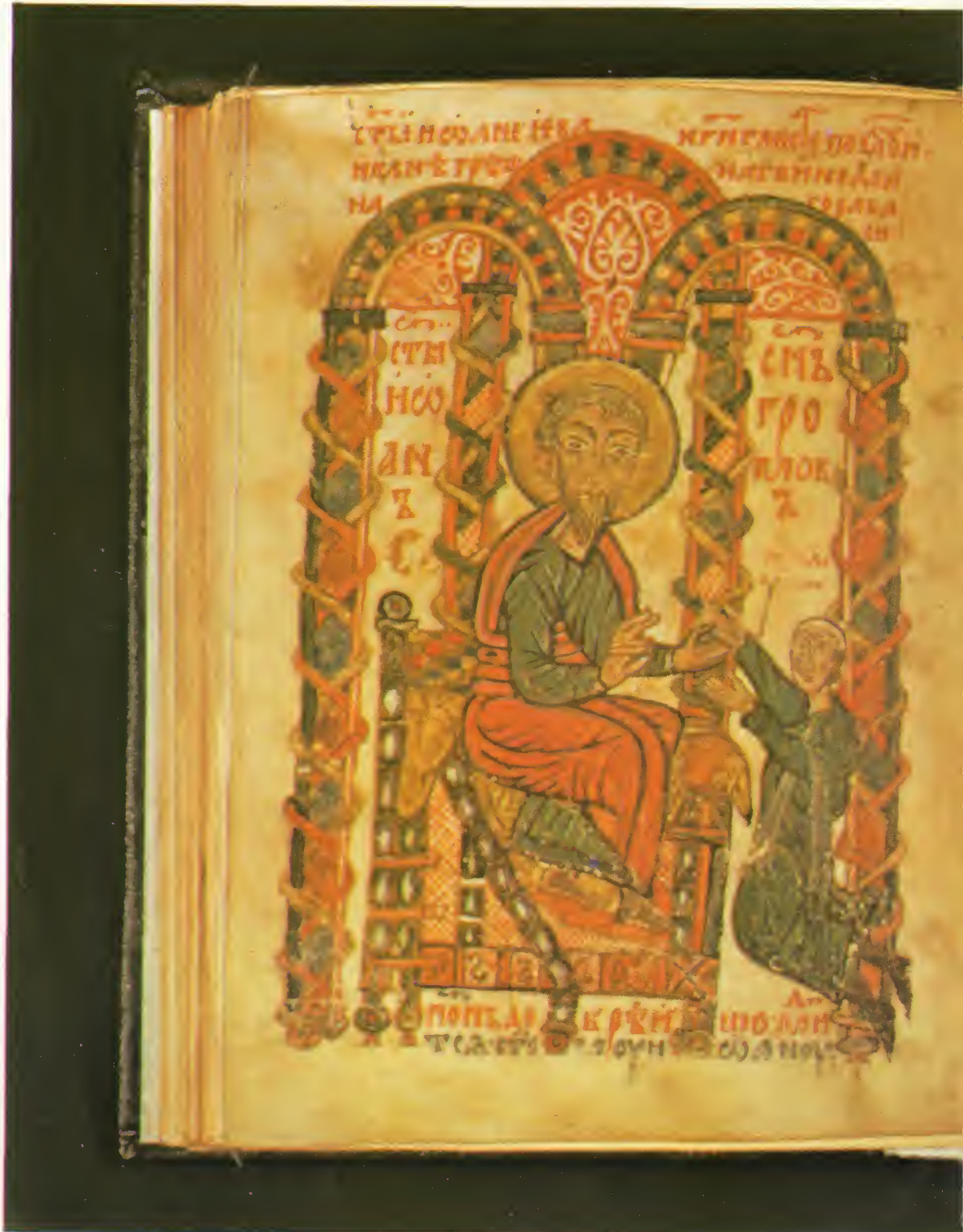
The map in the corridor shows the three largest European powers during the 9th century: Bulgaria, Byzantium and the Empire of the Franks of Charles the Great.

Copies of two columns with commemorative Proto-Bulgarian inscriptions from the town of Provadia, Varna district, are shown here. The inscriptions commemorate the memory of Onegavon and Okorsis, outstanding Proto-Bulgarian commanders of Khan Omourtag, who died in the defence of the Bulgarian borders along the Drava, Middle Danube and Tisa, to the north-east and the Dnieper River to the south-east.

Case 1 (against the wall) shows the famous List of Bulgarian Khans, a copy of a parchment from a later Russian copy (15th-16th century). This is one of the most important and earliest Bulgarian historical documents, but the original was lost. The list was engraved on stone, probably in Greek. Perhaps it was translated into Slavonic under Simeon the Great, and was included in the Book of Kings. The list was compiled on two occasions — once during Khan Asparoukh's reign and during the second half of the 7th century. The list represents a kind of chronicle giving the names of the rulers and the years of their reign, according to the Proto-Bulgarian calendar, where a twelve-year cycle was used, and each year was named after a certain animal — the ox, the mouse, the tiger, etc.,



53. The Dobreisho Gospel, parchment, 13th century, 127 sheets



while the months were given numerals. The lunar cycle was the basis of this imperfect calendar, not the solar cycle.

Case 2 contains the symbols of state officials: a lead seal of Prince Boris I (852-889) with the image of the ruler and Christ and an inscription running "Virgin Mary, help Michael, ruler of Bulgaria" (obverse) and "Lord, help Michael, ruler of Bulgaria" (reverse); a lead seal of Tsar Peter (927-970) from the Round Church in Preslav, with the bust of Tsar Peter and his Queen Maria, and an inscription in Greek: "Peter, Basilleus of the Bulgarians"; a lead seal of a Bulgarian boyar (nobleman) of the 10th century, found in Varna, with a cross on the reverse and an inscription on the obverse "Lord, help your servant" and "John Irthituin, Kana, bagatur"; a lead seal of a Preslav clergyman from the 9th century with the image of a cross and an inscription: "Lord, help your servant" and "Monte Georgi, and Councillor of Bulgaria".

The Round Gold Medallion of Khan Omourtag (814-831) weighing 2,7423 gm (21.27 carats) is of special interest. The medallion was found during excavations at Tsarevets in Turnovo in the residential part of the palace of the Second Bulgarian State. A stylized bust of a ruler is carved out with a low crown with a cross. He wears a mantle falling in folds and holds a sceptre with a cross, and an *akakia*. An inscription of mixed Greek and Latin letters is engraved: "(Medallion) of Khan Juvigi Omour-



ТЫ ЖЕ ОУЕ ПОДОБНОУ ТИЕ ТУЛКУ И
СЪРАЖЕТИНКУ. АБГЪТИЕ ТРАБУ ТЫ
ПОВНИНЪ ТЪАДЪАХЪ ЕГЪЖЕ
СЪГЪШЕНЫ. ПЖОБЛУЕННТАКО
ИВЪТЪАКО ЛЮБНИАВЪТЪ. АЖЕ
НИВЪДИНАИВЪАПАСТЪ. ПЖИЗБА
ВИНАИВЪПРИИЗНИ. **С**НАИЗБЕ
НАКАЗЪТЪНАШКЪАМОШЬ. ПОВИ
НАБЪТЪБОВИТЪ. ДВЪБЪТЪБОВИ
ШЕНИ. РЕКШНАПАСТЪ. ИДИНАИВЪ
БГА. ДРОВГААЖИВЪДИНАВОЛА. ДИЖИ
ВЪГА. БЛАГАИТЪ. АНЖИВЪПРИ
ИЗНИ. ДШЕВЪДИНАИТЪ. ИЖЕТЪАКО
МАЛТЫА. ИБЛАВНТИАШНАПА
СТИ. ИВЪДИНАИПРИИЗНИНА. Ф

tag" (61). The engraver depicted the pagan ruler Khan Omourtag with Christian symbols of authority, thus showing him to have equal standing with the Byzantine emperors. The iconography of Byzantine coins served as a model in particular coins from the 8th and the early 9th century. The broken tab indicates that it was worn by some personage close to the ruler as an insignia of an honorary position, which has been confirmed from written sources and archaeological excavations.

The central exhibit here is one of the most remarkable vessels — a pitcher from the Naggy Senkt Miklos Treasure, with a fine realistic composition — a horseman in armour, and a helmet, holding a spear on his shoulder and dragging a prisoner by the hair. This scene is interpreted as a triumph of a Bulgarian ruler returning after a victorious campaign.

In the corridor there is a photograph of the rock relief of the Madara horseman, a symbol of the might of the Bulgarian state. This is the oldest and largest monumental sculpture in Bulgaria and the only one of its kind in Europe. This masterpiece of Bulgarian sculpture was carved out with great skill on a 23 m high rock near the village of Madara, Shoumen district. The relief represents a horseman, riding with the confidence of a victor, and followed by a jumping dog with a lolling tongue. A lion, pierced by a spear, lies at the feet of the horse. There are inscriptions on either side of the composition and below it dealing with important events



in the history of Bulgarian-Byzantine relations. The first deals with the reign of Khan Tervel and Justinian II (785), the Byzantine Emperor, the second with Khan Kormisosh, and Leo III (717), and the third concerns Khan Omourtag and Mihail II (821). The figure is considered to be the image of a Bulgarian ruler. The Madara rock relief is a traditional Iranian subject, which was given new meaning in the Bulgarian lands during the 8th century. In style and iconography it has much in common with similar reliefs in Egypt, Assyria, and Persia, and later with the Parthians and the Sassanids.

The horseman on a stone block from Pliska (9th century) with a Greek text in the upper right part is an example of the artistic tradition in Proto-Bulgarian art.

Stone blocks from the walls of Pliska and Preslav with drawings of everyday and military life from the 9th and 10th century: horsemen with spears or arrows and accompanied by dogs, figures of animals, are shown on a pedestal in the corridor (opposite Room 18).

The entire wall in Room 18 shows a view of the capital of Pliska. Khan Asparoukh built Pliska as the first capital of Bulgaria — the seat of political and cultural life. It was situated in the plain near the present day town of Pliska, covering an area of 23 sq km. The capital was fortified by two concentric defensive walls. A trench and earthworks surrounded the town, and a massive stone-wall with towers and four gates protected the inner citadel. Standing here were monumental buildings, among them palaces made of ashlar. The nearby pagan shrines, dwellings of the aristocracy, a bath with a pool, and a large reservoir are remarkable monuments which are impressive even today. The workshops, shops, and markets found in Pliska speak of a flourishing town. Pliska stood out with its monumental structures, the combined outcome of Proto-Bulgarian traditions and Byzantine and Asiatic influences.

Monumental sculpture also includes two stone lions done in different styles (one of which is in the central hall of the museum). Probably the statue from the 9th century exhibited in the hall was part of the decoration of the Eastern Gate of Pliska, where it was found, serving as the foundation of a pillar.

The Slavs and the Proto-Bulgarians preserved their ethnic characteristics, way of life and cultural traditions up to the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 10th century. Specific features were retained in the dwellings, the livelihood, handicrafts, and the works of art. The examples of ceramic vessels and ornaments still show the dual ethnic features of the population of the Bulgarian state.

Case 3 contains ornaments from the 9th-10th century consisting of a variety of artifacts of gold, silver, bronze and glass, characteristic of the development of the Slavic type of ornament. Grape-shaped earrings, forerunners of more complex variants in the centuries that followed, were most popular. On show are several types: with four biconical grains, and a winding thin bronze thread, from the village of Izvor, Plovdiv district; with grape-shaped bronze pendants, from the village of Gradeshnitsa, Vratsa district; with four hollow silver biconical grains from Tolbukhin; the golden, grape-like earrings from the village of Odurtsi, Tolbukhin district. They are beautifully shaped and exquisitely executed. Particularly interesting are the grape-shaped earrings from the necropolises near the villages of Tabachka and Nikolovo, Roussé district, where fine specimens have been found. Necklaces of multicoloured glass beads were very popular. The necklace from the village of Vulchedrum, Mihailovgrad district

55. "St Iliya in the Cave, Fed by a Raven", a scene from a fragment of a mural at the Church of the Forty Holy Martyrs, Veliko Turnovo, 1230, 193 cm high



is a typical example. So is the silver ring from the village of Ignatitsa, Vratsa district, with an engraved geometric ornament. The two torques made of twisted bronze wires from the necropolis near the village of Obrochishté, Tolbukhin region were an insignia of rank, and were retained in later centuries. Similar torques have been found in Russia. That is indicative of the common Slav cultural heritage.

Case 4 contains the most typical Slav vessels (8th-10th century) — pots in elegant truncated cone shapes, pots decorated with parallel horizontal grooves and wavy lines, together with indentures and short vertical lines, skillfully done on the potter's wheel. They were found in settlements and necropolises in North-eastern Bulgaria. The earliest find is from the village of Popina, Silistra district (8th century).

A collection of beautiful, originally-shaped vessels, grey-black pitchers, pots, and bowls, made on a potter's wheel of refined clay can be seen in case 5. They come from necropolises in North-eastern Bulgaria (8th-10th century). Their decorations of horizontal grooved lines underline the separate parts of the vessels, covered with shiny vertical or a network of shiny lines. This type belongs to the so-called Saltovo-Mayats culture, popular in Northern Caucasus, along the coast of the Sea of Asov.

In cases 6-10 is a copy of the Naggy Senkt Miklos Treasure, an early Bulgarian masterpiece from the 9th century. The original is kept at the Kunsthistorische Museum in Vienna, and was found in Banat (present-day Romania), an area which belonged to the Bulgarians up to the coming of the Magyars in 896. The collection consists of 23, 18-22 carat gold vessels, weighing 9.945 kg. Various opinions exist, both Bulgarian and foreign, about its origin. The view about its Bulgarian origin appears to be most convincing, since that is evident from the inscriptions on the vessels.

The two pitchers in the treasure are among the most interesting objects. One of the vessels (case 2) features three compositions with mythological subjects:

1. A gryphon attacking a deer (a symbol of the struggle between good and evil), which is a subject from Iranian mythology, adopted by the Turkic peoples, who transmitted it to Medieval European art; 2. A man riding a half-beast half-human creature, shooting at a panther with bow and arrow. It is interpreted as the image of a legendary ruler; 3. An eagle carrying a nude female figure with raised hands, holding a branch. The second pitcher (case 7) is somewhat flattened and decorated with figures of storks wading among water plants. It is richly ornamented. On either side an eagle is carrying a male figure. The prototype of this scene can be traced in the ancient Greek composition of the legend of the abduction of Ganimedes by Zeus in the guise of an eagle, so that Ganimedes would become his cup-bearer. A bearded man with a crown riding a winged horse (a mythological ancestral figure) appears on the narrower sides.

The fine oval charger in case 6 is with an ancient shape and a handle featuring two panther-like creatures and gryphons in an artistic posture. They are of special interest. The goblets (case 6) are of Avar and Proto-Bulgarian origin and are found in many places in Europe and Asia. The shallow bowls (cases 7, 8), with a buckle for the purpose of hanging them, typical of the nomadic way of life, have engraved crosses and a Greek liturgical inscription. Case 9 contains a goblet finely decorated with six medallions and floral motifs, together with figures of mythical animals — a bull, a goat, a lion and an eagle.

Side by side are communion cups, with floral motifs, a polygonal rhyton.

56. Icon of the Virgin Eleusa, wood, distemper, Nessebur, 13th-14th century, 123 cm

bowls in the shape of a bull with lion paw-shaped legs, probably used for ritual purposes. Iranian, Asiatic (Turkic), ancient and Byzantine art influences are noticeable in the shapes and ornamentation of these fine vessels, reflecting traditional Proto-Bulgarian artistic concepts. These vessels in fact constitute a blending of adopted foreign elements and more primitive shapes, part of the nomadic way of life. Probably these luxury vessels, made at different times and at various workshops, belonged to several generations of Proto-Bulgarian aristocratic families.

Up to the middle of the 9th century the religion of the ruling Proto-Bulgarian khan dynasties got to a certain extent established as a state religion. The principal deity of the Slavs was Peroun. The Bulgarians venerated only one supreme god Tangra — the God of the Heavens, sun and light, a deity common to all Turkic communities in Asia. All shrines found so far are linked to the cult of Tangra. The plans of the shrines in Pliska, Preslav and Madara represent two inscribed rectangular buildings with an altar in the middle. A column dating from the 9th century with the name of the Proto-Bulgarian god Tangra carved on it and found in Madara can be seen in the exhibition area together with a brick from Pliska featuring a primitive anthropomorphic image of the sun, is also dated from the 9th century. Here, too, is a collection of small bronze anthropomorphic and zoomorphic amulets. They reflect the varied and



complex world view of the Bulgarians and served to ward off evil. Featured on the amulets are realistic figures of a two-headed horse, two birds facing each other, a bow and arrow, a dog, a bird, and a leopard. The figures of a horse with a large moustached and bearded human head and a human head on an openwork bust are among the most interesting exhibits. There are also two highly original pendants from Preslav from the 9th and 10th centuries with the fantastic face of a man with a beard and moustache, the enormous ears of an animal and a five-leaf palmette on the head. Amulets were probably worn for a long time after the adoption of Christianity due to the persistence of earlier religious beliefs.

Case 13 contains a tile (62) with the image of a High Priest of a pagan cult, a schematized male figure, holding a bird in the right hand (found in Madara); a stone candelabra with the image of a High Priest; the small figure of a horse and geometric ornaments from the village of Ovcharovo, Turgovishtë district; a stone model of a yurta, a Proto-Bulgarian dwelling, with graphic sketches of a human figure shooting with a bow; a small figure of a horse and an unidentifiable object from Devnya, Varna district; a plate (a copy) with a human figure in relief with a close-clipped beard and moustache, wearing a hat in the shape of a crown and holding a sceptre in the right hand, serpents to the side, and animal figures below with and illegible inscription around the head (from Shoumen).

57



57. The signet ring of Tsar Kaloyan (1197-1207) gold, Veliko Turnovo, 1.9 cm in diameter, 61.15 gm

58. Icon, gold, enamel, town of Elena, Veliko Turnovo district, 13th century, 5.3 cm high

The Slavs and the Proto-Bulgarians preserved their burial customs, which they had brought from their former lands. The Proto-Bulgarians interred their dead in graves, leaving vessels with offerings or whole animals. The Slavs burned their dead, and placed the remains in urns which were buried in holes or tomb chambers. A restored chamber from the Slav necropolis in the village of Razdelna, Varna district, is shown in case 14. The chamber is made of bricks and contains an urn with bones collected from the pyre (dated towards the end of the 8th-10th century).

Two sculptured figures (copies) known as "stone grandmothers" are associated with funeral rites and can be seen in the corridor in front of Room 18. They were found in the village of Tsarev Brod, Shoumen district, to the west of Pliska. One of the sculptures is that of a man, the other of a woman. It is difficult to make out the faces. However, the vestments have been better preserved. Only the front part of the sculptures are worked. The two figures are in full length, holding their hands in front and holding a goblet. The two sculptures are realistic figures of a corpulent man and a woman. The man wears an Eastern type of helmet, and is dressed in a short caftan with a belt, with various unidentifiable objects hanging from it, attached by leather straps. The folds of the dress of the woman's figure are also realistically rendered. There are different interpretations of the origin of these two monuments, which are variously



59. Earrings — ear-taps, gold, Nikopol Treasure, 19th century, 4.1 cm in diameter

60. Necklace, gold, Nikopol Treasure, 14th century, 4.1 cm in diameter

attributed to Proto-Bulgarian origin (9th century) or the presence of Cumans in North-eastern Bulgaria during the 12th and 13th century.

Prince Boris I adopted Christianity as the state religion in 865. This act was called for by the social and economic development of the country — the establishment of feudal relations, as well as because of foreign policy considerations to consolidate the international standing of Bulgaria. The two ethnical groups — the Slavs and the Proto-Bulgarians became one Bulgarian nation and Bulgaria joined the Christian world. A number of exhibits are connected with this major political event.

A colour photograph is shown of the miniature of Prince Boris I from the Instructive Gospel by Constantine of Preslav, from a Russian copy from the 13th century. A copy of the inscription commemorating the baptism of Prince Boris I and the Bulgarian people from Balshi, dated from the second half of the 9th century is also exhibited here. A photograph is shown of the Round Church in Preslav, a masterpiece of Bulgarian architecture, built at the time of Tsar Simeon. The miniature *The Baptism of the Bulgarians* from the Chronicle of Manassies (14th century) is also on show here. A capital with crosses dating from the 10th century is mounted on a pedestal. Then come the following exhibits: lead seal of Prince Boris I (852-889) found during excavations in the village of Debelt, Bourgas district; part of a painted ceramic iconostasis made of three arches with geometric motifs and the top of a leaf-shaped column ornament (10th century) found in Preslav; an expressive ceramic relief of a saint and a painted medallion of an archangel (10th century); fragments of painted ceramic icons (9th-10th century), also from Preslav.

To consolidate the new religion, the mass production of icons and crosses set in. Case 16 contains a collection of encolpia from the 10th and 11th century. The crucifixion revealing the meaning of man's salvation was the main theme, while the Virgin is depicted on the reverse. The encolpia come from the village of Archar, Vidin district, the church near the village of Lalkovo, Yambol district, from Vratsa and Pernik.

Case 17 contains vessels used in church services: a gold plate for the communion bread with a cross and a liturgical inscription in Greek: "Eat, for this is my body", (dated from the first half of the 10th century) from Preslav; a ceramic goblet with green glaze, decorated with straight and wave-like lines (11th century) from Pliska.

The adoption of Christianity was a turning point in the development of Bulgarian material culture. It united the achievements of Slavs and Proto-Bulgarians, and enriched the new acquisitions from the East Mediterranean world, thus emerging as a unified culture with a variety of forms of human initiative, in many cases the unique experience of the Bulgarian State and the Bulgarian people.

The second capital of Bulgaria — Veliki Preslav, built by Tsar Simeon,



an ambitious and erudite ruler, became a political and cultural centre in 893. Strong walls with towers and gates protected the inner and outer town. A number of monastery complexes were built in the vicinity and became centres of cultural life. Monumental buildings with remarkable architecture and finely decorated exteriors and interiors, consisting of stone work, painted ceramics, and multicoloured mosaics represented the new art tendencies of the age of Simeon during the 10th century. Veliki Preslav rivalled Constantinople in beauty and became one of the principal centres in South-eastern Europe. Included here is a large photograph of the Palace in Preslav, and details of architectural ornaments from Preslav (9th-10th century).

The monumental structures contributed to considerable achievements in artistic masonry. The architectural details such as cornices, friezes, facing tiles, columns, etc., are all part of a wealth of ornaments, most often with geometric and floral motifs. The use of glazed colour ceramic tiles inlaid on a white marble background was an original technique.

Case 21 contains marble tiles of different shape and size: square, hexagonal, leaf-shaped, triangular, rhombus-shaped, in white, green, and red, which, in their combination made fine complex floor mosaics (*Opus sectile*); cubes of wall mosaics, glass in various colours, gilt mosaic stones from the Round Church at Preslav (9th-10th century).

A lion's head (10th century) from the exterior decorations of Church No I in the Avradaka locality, Preslav (63), is shown in case 22. The use of brick powdered paste underlines the details of the sculpture and the wide-open eyes.

Towards the end of the 9th century Preslav became the centre for the production of ceramic decorations for numerous buildings in the capital. Pre-glazed earthenware reached its height in stylistic perfection during the 10th century. It was characteristic of the original local style which initially came from the East, thus differing in style from other European ceramic centres. The white clay painted ceramics of Preslav were the work of skilled craftsmen, as the numerous workshops and tiles with Cyrillic letters which made up complete texts show. Unsurpassed works were created here by designers who produced fine combinations of a variety of colours and a wealth of ornamental patterns, consisting of geometric and floral motifs, images of birds and animals. Glazed ceramic icons were the highest achievements in this field.

Painted ceramic wares from Preslav from the 9th and 10th century are shown in case 18: ceramic facing tiles (copies) and different original samples of geometric or floral motifs: peacock feathers, dandelion rosettes, palmettes, images of birds; facing friezes with vine ornamentation; cornices with alternating five-leaf palmettes; a fragment of floor tiles made of limestone with chequered inlaid and painted tiles from the Church in the Touzlaluka locality.

The exhibited luxury tableware is done with equal skill: bowls with an eight-leaf rosette; a fragment of a bowl featuring a lion facing right; a fine goblet with two handles, decorated both inside and outside with palmettes; a bowl decorated with peacock feathers; fragments of a vessel with a fine image of a gryphon; a bowl with the figure of a bird in relief.

Case 19 bears evidence of the emergence of new types alongside with the common types of existing vessels and ornaments, reflecting the rise of a unified Bulgarian nation. Exhibited here are kitchenware and tableware from the 9th and the 10th century. Glazed vessels in an elegant style, some of them imitating metal vessels are of particular interest. Amphorae, an amphora-shaped jug, and pitchers which recall Byzantine ceramic wares were also very popular. Some of these vessels had relief and grooved ornamentation: a pear-shaped jug from the commercial section of Preslav, which has an incised schematic drawing of a boot prior to baking; an elongated amphora (64), decorated with the figure of a lizard on one side and two schematic figures of lizards on the other, from the village of Ryahovo, Roussé district; a bucket-shaped vessel richly decorated with incised figures of horses, birds, and a deer.

The same case contains ornaments of metal or glass from the 9th-10th century which illustrate the flourishing of the goldsmith art. The traditional Proto-Bulgarian belts with metal application, decorated with

interesting floral and animal motifs were still worn. Earrings and three-piece pendants attached on little chains, found in the necropolis near the village of Touhovishté, Blagoevgrad district and exhibited here, are among the rare ornaments of the period. The necklace of hollow nut-like metal beads come from the same necropolis; necklaces with multicoloured glass beads were widespread at the time; bracelets were also made of glass; open metal bracelets with stylized snake heads, an ornament originating in Antiquity.

Objects of bone and medieval games are exhibited in case 20. The great skill of the craftsmen is evident in the collection made up of different objects. A rectangular tile (10th-11th century) with the figure of an animal (65) done in relief of a furrowed surface (from Preslav); a comb with two facings; joints for a spindle adorned with a "bird's eye"; small horns and handles; small tiles of various sizes for inlay work.

Objects associated with games still played today are of special interest. Exhibited here are 22 backgammon counters (diameter 3.6/3.4 cm) decorated with concentric lines, some of them with traces of red paint; dice, with figures made up of small circles, found in the monastery yard of the Touzhaluka locality near Preslav; two figures in the shape of amphora and a barrel (9th-10th century) probably for chess, found at the Preslav Palace; a brick from Cherven with a draughts chart carved on it, one of

61



61. Khan Omourtag's medallion (814-831), gold, Veliko Turnovo, 2 cm in diameter

the oldest games in the world.

After the death of Tsar Simeon during the second half of the 10th century the Bulgarian State went through a political and social crisis. Byzantium succeeded in conquering the North-eastern Bulgarian lands. The flourishing capital of Preslav and symbol of the greatness of the Bulgarian State and its people was captured by Emperor John Tzimiskes in 971. The third capital, Ohrid, became the political, economic and cultural centre of the state. Situated on two hills overlooking Lake Ohrid the town was well fortified. The Ohrid citadel whose remains are preserved to this day was erected during the reign of Simeon (a photograph of Samouil's Fortress). A tombstone inscription (a copy) placed on the orders of Tsar Samouil (993) in memory of his parents and brothers, found in the church in the village of German, Yugoslavia, is on show. The most convincing proof of the continuous struggle between Bulgaria and Byzantium are the fortresses, built in the South-western Bulgarian lands towards the end of the 10th century and the early 11th century. Also exhibited here is a copy of an inscription marking the occasion of the renovation of the Bitola Fortress in 1015-1016 on the order of Tsar Ivan Vladislav.

Exhibits of 11th and 12th century Bulgarian history are shown in the corridor leading to Rooms 18 and 19.

In 1018 Bulgaria fell under Byzantine rule and lost its independence for almost two centuries. The feudal order imposed by the Byzantine administration through its military system and through taxation was consolidated. Regardless of the unfavourable conditions the Bulgarian people developed their material and spiritual culture in accordance with the existing traditions, as well as under the influence of Byzantine civilization.

Case 1 contains ceramic vessels (11th and 12th century). New styles emerged together with traditional forms and ornamentation techniques. The exhibits are chiefly from the Pernik Fortress: elegant pitchers with fine proportions, jugs with one or two handles, small pitchers with variously shaped mouths — a narrow mouth, a dandelion-shaped mouth, a funnel-shaped mouth, decorated with vertically drawn lines, covered with red and gold glazure, and colours typical of Byzantine pottery. The two-handled wine vessel (*buklitsa*) from Haskovo is a rather rare kind.

Ornaments and seals from the 11th and 12th centuries are exhibited in case 2. They come from necropolises found in the Haskovo district. These are ornaments worn by commoners: earrings decorated with hollow spheres, covered with granules and meshed bronze and silver wire. The old type of plain flat and spiral bracelets made of wire with relief ornaments were still fashionable. The ends are in the shape of animal heads. Bracelets made of spiral and multicoloured glass fibers in various combinations were prevalent. The most effective bracelets were made of dark blue glass with animal figures, birds and volutes, made of white paste. Also on show are the seals of individuals and high-ranking nobility (Duke Constantine Umberto, Sebastos Constantine, Umberto and Proedrius Leontii) and the seal of the Emperor Nicephoros Votaniates. The seals were found during excavations at the Pernik Fortress.

The Bulgarian people did not submit to the cruel oppression of the conquerer. The struggle of the Bulgarians to regain their independence resulted in a number of rebellions which began early in the 11th century, led by Peter Delyan (1042-1043), Nikolitsa Delfina (1066), Georgi Voyteh (1072), Nestor (1074), Dobromir and Lek (1078) and Travel (1084-1086). A table shows the centres of the struggle for independence. A miniature

62. A shaman featured on a tile, village of Madara, Shoumen district, 9th century, 30 cm high

(a photo copy of the Madrid manuscript of the Chronicle of John Skilitza, 12th-13th century) shows "rebellious Bulgarians proclaiming Peter Delyan as their king".

The struggle culminated in a successful uprising led by the Brothers Assen and Peter (1185-1186) in the lands between the Danube and the Balkan Range. The centre of that uprising was the town of Turnovo, which became the fourth capital of Medieval Bulgaria. A photograph of the Church of St Dimiter in Turnovo is also shown in the photo. It is believed that the uprising was declared at the church.

Probably these were the troubled times when the treasure of gold coins from the time of the Byzantine emperors Alexis I Comnenos (1081-1118), John II Comnenos (1118-1143) and Manuil I Comnenos (1143-1180) was buried and later found near the village of Gornoslav, Plovdiv district (Room 18, case 24).



Second Bulgarian State — 12th-14th Century

The Bulgarian State was restored in 1187 after the successful uprising of the Assen family against Byzantium. Under Tsar Kaloyan (1197-1207) the war of liberation of the Bulgarian people was concluded, achieving the desire of the Bulgarians towards unification. Bulgaria became a major military and political force on the Balkan Peninsula. The independence of the country won recognition from Innocent III and blocked the expansion of the Latin Empire in South-eastern Europe. Under Ivan Assen II (1218-1241) the unity of the Bulgarian lands was restored and the Bulgarian lands bordered on three seas — the Black Sea, the Aegean and the Adriatic. The territory of Bulgaria under Kaloyan and Ivan Assen II is shown on one of the maps.

The commemorative inscription carved out on the order of Ivan Assen II on one of the columns of the Church of the Forty Holy Martyrs in Turnovo, is evidence of the considerable territorial expansion of Bulgaria after the great victory over the Byzantines at Klokotnitsa in 1230. A copy of the inscription and the column commemorating the Klokotnitsa battle is on show in this room.

Case 1 contains the symbols of statehood: one of these is a unique exhibit — the lead seal of Tsar Kaloyan (1197-1207); The Virgin and the inscription "The Holy Virgin" is engraved on the obverse and the text "Kaloyan, Tsar of the Bulgarians" features on the reverse; here too is the golden seal of Tsar Constantine Assen (1257-1277) and a lead seal belonging to Patriarch Visarion (13th century); there are also specimens and copies of silver coins of Bulgarian rulers, among them a gold coin of Tsar Ivan Assen II (1218-1241).

The charters of Bulgarian rulers drawn up at the palace chancery were official documents with the signature of the ruler in red ink and sealed with a gold seal. These charters were issued to different monasteries, which were ideological supporters of the feudal order. Case 2 contains the Vitosha Charter of Tsar Ivan Shishman, issued before 1382. The original is kept at the Zograph Monastery. According to the charter, lands were granted to the Monastery of the Holy Virgin, in the foothills of Mount Vitosha and exempted the monastery and its officials from obligations to the central authority, thus effectively granting them immunity. The Mraka Charter, granted by Tsar Ivan Alexander in 1347 (the original is kept at the Hilendar Monastery); granted lands and immunity to the Monastery of St Nicholas, in the Mraka locality, Radomir district.

Part of the lid of the stone sarcophagus of Tsar Ivan Alexander (14th century) found at the Palace Church at Tsarevets, Turnovo, is an important historical monument of the period (the original is kept at the District History Museum in Turnovo); the lower part of the cloak and the legs of the sculptured figure of the ruler are preserved; a two-headed eagle — a symbol of royalty was engraved in relief on the shoe. This monument,

as well as other tombstones from Tsarevets, show the impact of European Gothic art.

A capital, decorated with three figures in relief with birds with intertwined heads, a two-headed eagle, a gryphon, and a monogram of Tsar Mihail Shishman (14th century), all of them from the Palace at Tsarevets, are original works of stone sculpture (66).

The new capital of Turnovo became a major political and administrative centre where cultural life flourished during the Second Bulgarian State. The town is picturesquely located along the naturally fortified hills of Tsarevets, Trapezitsa and Sveta Gora. Tsarevets became both the seat of central authority and of the Orthodox Church. A ten-meter high stone wall with towers and three gates surrounded an area of 100,000 sq m. Here rose the finest architectural ensembles — the Royal Palace and the Patriarchal Palace. They were the main features of the capital. It was a centre of arts and literature. The fame of Turnovo spread not only in the Bulgarian lands but also in South-eastern Europe. Contemporary chroniclers refer to it as a fine, well populated and well fortified stronghold of the Bulgarian Kingdom. A number of other Medieval towns also flourished in Cherven, Lovech, Melnik, Nikopol and Nessebur.

Case 3 contains Medieval Bulgarian arms: a helmet (67), a suit of chainmail armour, one of them silver-plated, swords, a club, spearheads,



63

63. A gargoyle in the shape of a lion's head, limestone, Preslav, Church No 1 at the Avradaka locality, 10th century, 20 cm high



arrowheads, stirrups and spurs. Siege machines were used for defence and attack, as can be clearly seen from the exhibited stone balls from Cherven (pedestal 1).

Feudal relations in Bulgaria reached their height during the 13th and 14th century. Developing alongside were agriculture, the crafts and trade in urban medieval centres. Besides the feudal aristocracy and the serfs, which were the two principal classes in Bulgaria, the craftsmen and merchants formed separate social groups. Bulgaria maintained political, economic and cultural ties with states in the East and in the West.

Goldsmiths' workshops flourished during this period — fine gold, silver, copper and bronze artifacts were worked in various techniques: filigree, granulation, faceted enamel, wrought silver and casting of silver and gold ornaments, illustrating the aesthetic tastes of craftsmen and the public alike.

Case 4 contains the treasure from the village of Drouzhba, Vidin district (14th century) found in 1957. It consists of fine ornaments and a bowl; part of a belt, made of triangular plates and pendants, decorated in alternating relief; gilt silver images of a lion and a dragon; a diadem — an expensive and beautiful ornament made of rectangular cassettes with multicoloured paste stones set in the middle and cruciform pendants, some of which have strings of natural pearls and coral; a bracelet with rhombic



65

64. An amphora-shaped jug featuring a lizard in relief, glazed ceramics, village of Ryahovo, Roussé district, 10th century, 33 cm high

65. A tile with zoomorphic images, bone, Preslav, 10th-11th century, 4.6 cm high

figures of hammered out points, spiral-shaped with triangular plates ending in granules; heavy earrings, with elongated granules and small pyramids; the silver facing of a medallion; a gilded bow with geometric spiral decorations and an inscription in Greek in the centre.

A treasure of a number of metal vessels (one of them is in Room 6) was found in 1970 at the Shoumen Fortress. It consists of a rounded pitcher with a funnel-shaped mouth, a silver bowl with a hollow handle, shaped as a lion's head, a gilded bowl of silver with a relief image of a centaur.

A collection of bowls and silver goblets from the 14th century with a variety of forms and a wealth of ornamentation, some of them gilded, is shown here. The image of a lion appears on a shallow bowl, surrounded by floral motifs (found in the village of Beli Izvor, Vratsa district) together with another bowl with decorations in relief and a gryphon; another vessel with an engraved figure of a dragon in the middle of a medallion, surrounded by palmettes and beasts and a two-headed eagle in a six-leaf rosette at each end of the vessel (village of Cherkovna, Turgovishtë district) are also shown here (68).

A treasure found at Nîkopol consists of a belt with various silver applications, and a bowl with a foreign coat-of-arms. The fashion of wearing belts with applications came from the West.

Also exhibited here are a fine lock with figures of dogs and a candlestick made of prancing stylized horses.

Sgraffito pottery was also produced on a large scale during the 13th and the 14th century and became a widespread type of pottery. It differs in its decoration from the pottery in Byzantium and the Near East, where it appeared as far back as the 9th century. The techniques of sgraffito pottery involved covering the vessel with a layer of a glazure, made of white clay, the contours of the ornament being outlined with a sharp object, thus taking on the colour of the clay of the pot. Geometric, floral motifs, mythological realistic and animal figures served as ornamentation. Spots of yellow, brown, green glazure provided a varied colour scheme. After this the glazure-covered pottery was baked.

The variety of shapes and ornamental motifs of this type of pottery produced in the chief centres during the Middle Ages are shown in case 5: bowls and vessels with images of birds — a dove among trees (69); a lion; a horse, a stylized serpent, and rhombus-shaped geometric figures from Preslav.

Three interesting vessels also belong to this collection: a large vessel with seven handles and a spout in a "stylized" manner, used for special occasions; a pitcher, decorated with images of cats, drawn in two lines and a line of birds; an oval wine cup with two handles and two thick legs. Several bowls with oval ornaments, filled in with spirals, five-leaf rosettes

on the sides, and an inscribed palmette on the bottom with spirals running around it, (from the fortress at Melnik); bowls with floral elements (from Cherven); goblets, candlesticks and lamps (from Turnovo, Cherven and Balchik). Pottery and luxury wares imported from the Near East for the needs of the court and the high clergy, as well as the aristocracy during the 13th and 14th century are included here. Exhibited in case 6 are a vessel with the figure of a dragon, in a striking posture; a pitcher with birds in relief from Varna, imported from Byzantium; a vessel with geometric and floral ornaments covered in light green glazure of seladon, imported from China; a pitcher with decorations of vertical lines with semi-palmettes and vessels with images in relief — a bull and a hare, and a fragment of a vessel with part of a human face, both Byzantium. from

Agricultural implements and craftsmen's tools used during the Middle Ages are exhibited in case 7: a ploughshare, a reaping hook, a sickle, a scythe, a trowel, a compass, scissors, a gimlet, axes, and adze and others, all evidence the advancement of agriculture and the development of the crafts. Commodity money circulation increased within the dominating natural economy. Production of commodities led to the development of internal and external commerce. Craftsmen's wares were bartered at markets or sold. Bulgaria maintained ties with Dubrovnik, Genoa, Venice and Byzantium.



66

66. A capital featuring zoomorphic images and the monogram of Tsar Mihail Shishman, marble, Veliko Turnovo, the Palace in Tsarevets, 14th century, 22 cm high

67. A helmet, iron, 12th-14th century, 33 cm high

68. Bowl with decorations in relief, gilt silver, village of Cherkovna, Turgovishté district, 14th century, 17.7 cm long

67



The Commercial Treaty (a facsimile) concluded between Genoa and the Dobroudja Principality, under Ivanko, the heir of Dobrotitsa, offers evidence of active trade with Bulgarian wheat. This treaty ensured free access for the Genoese merchants to import ships, gold, silver and other valuable commodities freely.

Two hoards of silver coins from the reign of Tsar Ivan Alexander (302 coins), found at Varna and from the reign of Tsar Ivan Alexander with his sons Michail, Ivan-Stratsimir and Ivan Shishman as co-rulers (796 coins) found at Roussé, are exhibited in case 8.

Parts of textiles interwoven with gold threads from luxurious garments from the 14th century found at the Kroumovo Kalé locality, Turgovishtë district, are exhibited in case 9.

Bulgarian ornaments of the 13th and 14th century followed early Medieval traditions in the further development and variety of their forms. The execution of models improved, new types appeared with new decorative motifs, which was due to ties with the Western world. A large collection of massive gold and silver ear tabs and silver earrings (case 10) are typical in their variety: they are spherical, double cone-shaped, crescent-shaped, in filigree and decorated with granules and precious stones. Ear tabs were attached to the hair, to a kerchief or a diadem.

Open spiral type and intertwined bracelets decorated with triangular



68

plates with filigree and granules made of gold and silver were typical adornments of the period (later these forms of bracelets evolved into spiral bracelets with loops, widespread in Bulgaria and other Slav countries). Torques of intertwined silver wire remained popular ornaments as well. This type was found in the treasure buried in the stone cassette at Preslav (case 11).

Copper, bronze and glass ornaments, necklaces, bracelets and earrings were also made for commoners. The existence of workshops for the production of such less expensive wares with ornaments was confirmed when stone molds were found during excavations (case 12). The copy of the illustrated calendar (at the Church of the Forty Holy Martyrs in Turnovo), dated 1230 (a copy) is a remarkable monument. Small scenes of the lives of some saints represent different feasts during the year, and each composition notes the date of the painting of the depicted event. Most of the scenes follow the tradition of Byzantine miniatures from the 12th century, and serve as an example of calendar painting during the 13th and 14th century in all East Orthodox countries. The practice of depicting saints was also followed in churches in Bulgaria and the neighbouring countries. The Calendar at the Church of the Forty Holy Martyrs is the oldest prototype of all illustrated calendars.

Richly decorated churches were also built on a wide scale during the

Middle Ages alongside representative secular buildings. Church facades were made of alternating bands of rhythmical layers of brickwork and stonework and enlivened through blind arches and colourful yellow and green glazed bowl-like ceramic plastic ornaments and four-leaved rosettes, while the interior was decorated with fine murals. Stone sculpture was used as an ornament to a lesser extent. Floral and geometric ornaments as well as human and animal figures were carved out on cornices, capitals, altar plates and icons. The human figures that have come down are done in the style of monumental art. The impact of European Gothic art is visible on some monuments from the second half of the 14th century. Fragments of plastic ceramic ornaments and murals from Cherven and Turnovo are exhibited in this room. The two capitals with original ornaments of dogs' heads tied to one and the same chain, and the image of a saint, from the Tsarevets Palace are particularly interesting (14th century).

Increased exploitation of the people and a weakening of central authority resulted in an intensified class struggle and the rise of Bogomilism and the anti-feudal rebellion of Ivailo (1277-1280).

A heresy and an anti-feudal movement, Bogomilism was one of the most important manifestations of the social thought and the spiritual values of the Bulgarian people during the Middle Ages. It appeared during

69



69. A bowl with the image of a dove, sgraffito ceramics, Veliko Turnovo, the Palace in Tsarevets, 13th-14th century, 20.7 cm in diameter

the 10th century, and represented a heresy opposed to the official Church and its ideology. During the 12th-13th century the numbers of Bogomil followers grew and they formed their own communities which spread to villages and towns in Eastern and South-eastern Europe — the Byzantine Empire, the Russian principalities, Serbia, Bosnia, Hungary, and others. Bogomilism exerted a powerful influence on the heresy of the Cathars in Western Europe, the Albigoia, and the so-called Bougres. A special map shows the spread of Bogomilism which was an early precursor of the Reformation.

The only monument connected with the Bogomil movement is an inscription from the village of Gigen, Pleven district (10th century) running as follows: "May he... who reads (these lines) curse the heretic; and if he curses him not, may he himself be damned. And if he so curses the heretic may the Lord shower his mercy upon him, ... thus wrote Monk Ananias".

Ivailo's anti-feudal uprising was a manifestation of the class struggle during the 13th century. In the number of peasants that supported him, in the territory the uprising covered, in the strength of the blow it dealt to the ruling feudal class and state authority, and in its courageous struggle against foreign invaders — Byzantium and the Tatars — it ranks among the earliest and the largest peasant uprisings in Medieval Europe. The course and scope of the uprising are shown on the map in this room.

The process of feudalization of Bulgarian society reached its peak during the second half of the 14th century, and the country was divided in three parts: the Turnovo Kingdom, the Vidin Kingdom, and the Principality of Dobroudja. A number of smaller feudal fiefs broke away from central authority, waged incessant wars among each other and with the neighbouring Balkan states. This led to their political, economic and military exhaustion. Consequently they fell an easy prey to the Ottoman conquerors.



The Bulgarian Lands during the 15th-17th Century

National Resistance

Cultural Centres

The end of the 14th century witnessed a tragic turn in the history of the Bulgarian people. The Bulgarian feudal state was disintegrated and exhausted by wars and internal disorders. Internecine wars were common in the other Balkan states as well. This facilitated the conquest of South-eastern Europe by the Ottoman Turks. Bulgaria was overrun and its state and church ceased to exist, its economy was ruined, the works of art which the brilliant mediaeval culture had created were subjected to destruction. The power of the absolute theocratic Ottoman monarchy was established in the land of Bulgaria by force of arms. The natural development of the Bulgarian people was interrupted.

The new social, economic and political reality ran deeply counter to the centuries-long historical traditions of the Bulgarians. The conqueror imposed the oriental type of feudalism, characterized by centralization of the means of production, mainly the land. The Bulgarian people were flung down to the lowest rung of the social scale. It was regarded as completely deprived of rights and in the conditions of feudal exploitation was burdened with numerous duties, taxes, corvees, and obligations.

The oppressive policy of the conqueror as regards the subjected population also found expression in cruel religious and national discrimination. Islam was considered to be the absolute and most perfect religion. The Christian population, with no civil rights whatsoever, was eliminated from the state governing system and restricted in its public and national manifestations. The heaviest of taxations — the so-called blood tax — was designed to tear away the strongest and healthiest of children from their Bulgarian parents. These boys formed the rank and file of the so-called *enichars*' corps in the Turkish Army, where they were forcibly made to abandon their faith and mother tongue.

At the same time, the Ottoman Empire strived to integrate a large part of the subject population through assimilation by the forcible dissemination and propagation of the Islam, aimed at ideologically disarming Christianity. Through the forcible conversion to Mohammedanism, a considerable part of the Bulgarian population was coerced into accepting the

Muslim religion, into adopting the Turkish language, customs and way of life, and was thus incorporated into the dominant nationality.

Though deprived of the protecting institutions — an independent state and Church — without any rights, and cruelly suppressed, the Bulgarian people did not cease to exist, to fight and create. The way of life, the language and culture were those factors that nurtured their indomitable strength, enabling them to preserve their historical memory and Bulgarian consciousness throughout the centuries.

National Resistance

The exposition here reveals the features of the Ottoman military-feudal system through a small thematic collection displayed in Room 20. Some of the exhibits are weapons and armament (70) — an authentic proof of the Empire's military nature, and of the means it employed to impose its domination. Several copies of Turkish documents illustrate the Sultan's legislative power, as well as the rigid fiscal system. The presence of the Koran implies the role of religion in the life of the Ottoman Empire and underlies the policy of religious and national discrimination. The invaders' material culture is represented by a silver dinner service.

70





71. The Last Judgement — a mural, village of Arbanassi, Veliko Turnovo district, Church of the Nativity, 7th century



The second thematic collection in the room is devoted to the Bulgarian people's resistance against religious and national discrimination. A copy of Sebastos Ognyan's inscription on a rock can be seen here. In these tragic times for Bulgaria, Sebastos Ognyan — ruler of the Bozhenishki Urvich Fortress, heroically defended the stronghold from the Ottoman invaders. His declaration written upon the rock, for the sake of future generations, shows his devotion and loyalty to his faith and stock, and is an impressive monument to patriotism and Bulgarian national dignity. The silver coin treasure from the time of Tsar Ivan Shishman (1371-1393), was scattered on the ground by the fortress gate in those very unfortunate times.

In the first half of the 16th century, three Bulgarians who refused to be converted to Islam died in defence of their nationality in the town of Sofia. Canonizing them under the names of Georgi Novi (George the New), Georgi Noveishi (George the Newest), and Nikola Novi (Nicholas the New), the Church assigned them the highest dignity and virtue which was to be held in esteem throughout the centuries. The exposition displays several written works glorifying the valorous deed of the martyrs from Sofia: *Service and Life of Georgi Novi of Sofia*, by priest Peyo (16th century), *Service and Life of Nikola Novi of Sofia* by Matei Grammatik (1564), etc. The book *Geographical, Historical and Statistical Description of the Tatar-Pazardjik District* (1890) contains the chronicle account of priest Metodi Draganov from the village of Korova about the tragedy of the Bulgarians from the Chepino area during the time of their conversion to Islam (1670). The priest describes the atrocities and cruelties through which Islam was forcibly imposed, the devastation of 33 monasteries and 218 churches between the towns of Kostenets and Stanimaka. The icon of Archangel Michael personifies the love of the people for their Christian faith and Bulgarian spirit. The baptismal font and the cradle symbolize the protective role of the Christian religion and the people's way of life at the time of foreign oppression.

The material culture of everyday life proved to be one of the integrating factors for the Bulgarian nationality. Its elements manifest a stability which can be accounted for by the rich traditions of the preceding epoch. The stability and viability of the Bulgarian material culture stem from its deeply democratic nature as it was created by the people and for the people.

Pottery is a vivid testimony to the continuity of this tradition. The ceramic vessels from this period preserve the handicraft and decorative techniques of the past. In general the shape is also preserved. Harmoniously proportioned, they are chiefly made for practical use. At the same time, however, certain new shapes made their appearance, under the influence of Oriental and Western majolica earthen ware. The decoration is more colourful, while simultaneously it is lighter and shows greater freedom. The impact of colour dominates the ornamentation. The exhibits in the room are specimens of pottery found in archaeological excavations.

Domestic woodcutting, though of a modest nature at that time, also testifies to the rich creative potential of the Bulgarian people. The exposition includes copies of woodcuts from the interior of Hadji Iliya's house in the village of Arbanassi.

The other half of the room displays exhibits connected with the struggles of the Bulgarian people against the feudal Ottoman oppression, and the liberation movements during the 15th and the 17th century.

The early liberation movements (up to the middle of the 15th century)

72. St George featured on the bipartite icon St George, St Geronti and St Polychronia, wood, distemper, 16th century, Nessebur, 125 cm high

were connected with the Bulgarians' participation in the clash between the European Southeast and the Ottoman conquerors. The Bulgarian people rose in large numbers during the crusades of the Christian coalition of Poland, Hungary, Serbia and Transylvania, headed by the Polish King Wladislaw III Jagello and the chieftain Jan Khuniadi in 1443-1444, which ended with the Battle of the Peoples near the town of Varna. The exhibits show weapons and accoutrements of the knightly army.

The people's spontaneous discontent found serious expression in the haidouk movement which spread over the Bulgarian lands and the other Balkan lands as well. Courageous people who could not and would not tolerate the abuses and humiliations on the part of the oppressors, rose up in arms against them. Particularly intensive was the development of the haidouk movement in the south-western and north-western Bulgarian lands. In its essence, however, the haidouks' resistance was of a predominantly spontaneous nature and with limited objectives. The social environment, capable of organizing and making use of this spontaneous form of resistance for a liberation movement on a larger scale, was still lacking at the time.

There are numerous documents attesting to the broad scope of the haidouk movement, and to the struggle of the Ottoman Government against it. On display in the room are copies of royal decrees, orders and



others related to the tracing and capturing of haidouks. The next case contains a variety of weapons once belonging to haidouks.

Organizers of the anti-Ottoman resistance movement during the second half of the 16th century were most frequently representatives of the higher Orthodox clergy. The diplomatic activities and the steps they took to arouse the interest of Europe towards the Bulgarians and to secure political support for the liberation of the Balkan peoples show them to be politically skilful personalities.

The highest form of struggle during the period of the late Middle Ages were the people's uprisings. Their organization and breakout can be referred to the period from the 1680s to the end of the 17th century, when the military and political strength of the Ottoman Empire began to decline. The Bulgarian liberation movements of that period were closely connected with the wars waged by the Ottoman Empire, those with Austria in particular. A reliable support to the strivings of the Bulgarians for freedom at that time was Russia which had gained great international authority as a protector of the Christian Orthodox population on the Balkans.

In 1598 the First Turnovo Uprising broke out. Its organizers and leaders were: the notable from the town of Nikopol — Todor Ballina, the merchant from Dubrovnik — Pavel Djordjich, and the metropolitan bishop from the town of Turnovo — Dionysus Rally. Though well planned, cleverly availing of the favourable international situation and the heightened haidouk movement, the uprising was crushed. In its turn, however, it contributed greatly to the struggle against the Ottoman Empire.

The fight for liberation of the Bulgarian people was particularly intense during the 1780s — at the time of one of the successive wars waged by the Ottoman Empire against the European countries (1683-1699), and when three uprisings broke out in only three years.

The largest and best organized of these uprisings took place in the town of Chiprovtsi (1688) and spread over the North-western Bulgarian lands. It was organized by the Bulgarian Catholics who played a leading part in the 17th century liberation struggle. Having received their education in European colleges and universities, they had become acquainted with the progressive ideas of humanism. Patriotically-minded, with a keen national consciousness, they carried out energetic cultural and political activity. They made repeated attempts to get in touch with the leaders of several European states with the aim of securing their military support in a future large scale armed uprising of the Bulgarian people. Among the most prominent champions of the liberation were: Peter Bogdan Bakshiev, Peter Parchevich, Philip Stanislavov, Iliya Marinov. The peak of their patriotic activity was the Chiprovtsi Uprising. Despite the rebels' extraordinary valour, the uprising was most cruelly crushed. The insurgent area was devastated and its inhabitants were forced to flee abroad.

The two other uprisings — the Second Turnovo (1686) and the Karposhov's Uprising (1689), in their turn marked the wide scope of the liberation movement of the Bulgarian people. They promoted the unfolding of the resistance power and integrated a considerable part of the population in the struggle against the oppressors.

Despite their defeat, the uprisings of the late Middle Ages proved that the Bulgarians were irreconcilable to foreign domination and though deprived of a sovereign state, nationality and independence, they had the willpower and determination to rise up in arms and fight for their rights.

History has left scanty data about the liberation movements of the

73. Case exhibiting items produced at the Chiprovtsi school of goldsmiths
(Room 22)

Bulgarian people during that epoch. Excerpts from messages and letters of the uprisings' organizers and passages from the chronicles is all the information that is left. They are now on display in the wall cases of the room. Among the exhibits here are also facsimiles of documents written by Peter Parchevich and addressed to the head of the Roman Catholic Church and the superiors of the Catholic Congregation for disseminating the faith. These documents evidence the eagerness of the Bulgarian people to fight for their independence.

An interesting exhibit from that time is the *History of Bulgaria* by Peter Bogdan Bakshev, the title page of which is on display in a facsimile. The history was written in 1667, i.e. about a century before the monk Paissi of Hilendar wrote his *Slav-Bulgarian History*. Peter Bogdan's history was printed in Venice in 1675. Its entire text has not yet been discovered, but from the preface and four chapters preserved it becomes clear that it is a serious historical work based on the main sources of information about the history of Bulgaria. In his preface to the history, Peter Bogdan wrote: "...I was born out of the Bulgarian land and now, though weak with age, it is the thought about my fatherland that keeps me alive... This history is nothing but an ardent defence of my native country..."

Peter Bogdan was the first among the Bulgarian public figures who created a coat-of-arms for Bulgaria in 1643. Elements from this coat-



of-arms were used later in the personal coat-of-arms of Peter Parchevich as well. The graphic image of the two coats-of-arms can be seen among the exhibits.

Another wall case displays the phototype edition of the first Bulgarian printed book *Abagar* with elements of the new Bulgarian language. It was printed in Rome in 1651 in Cyrillic characters. Its author was the Catholic bishop from the town of Nikopol — Filip Stanislavov. The *Abagar* is a prayer book. But what gives it peculiar importance is the strongly expressed patriotic feeling of the author. In the preface to the book he calls himself “Bishop of Great Bulgaria” and says that he meant this book to be a gift for “his Bulgarian people”. Displayed next to the *Abagar* is the tombstone of its author.

A map of the Bulgarian lands graphically indicates the struggles of the Bulgarian people during the late Middle Ages.

The fact that the Bulgarian state was destroyed, and the long centuries of oppression, created a real danger of erasing Bulgaria from the memory of European public opinion. Documents from that epoch, however, testify that the Bulgarians did not lose their “presence” in the Western world. A number of factors contributed to this: the connections of prominent Bulgarian public circles with Europe, the direct impressions of the foreigners who happened to travel across our lands, cartographic traditions and others. Valuable sources in this respect were the navigation maps and the notes of the travellers.

The beginnings of modern European navigation cartography can be referred to the early 13th century. It appeared as a result of the unusually rapid development of production forces in Europe. Commercial and military shipping required exact navigation maps. The first such maps were made of a single piece of skin but owing to their large size, they soon fell out of use. From the early 14th century on, the making of atlases began, the pages of which were maps of different sea regions.

The name of Bulgaria appeared for the first time on 9th century maps. On 15th-17th century maps the Bulgarian lands were indicated through outlining the political and ethnical boundaries of the medieval Bulgarian state, its system of villages, its road networks and so on. Frequently under the names of the towns there were images of fortresses. In most instances they were of a conventional type, but sometimes individual differences occurred too. The inscriptions with the name of Bulgaria on the maps after the 15th century meant a recognition of Bulgaria's right to exist as a state.

The navigation maps usually indicated in red the more important fortresses, ports, or states. Interesting in this respect is the map of Filippo Francini of 1696, where only the names of Bulgaria and Russia were written in red.

Fra Mauro's map of the world of the 15th century submits information about the political and ethnic boundaries of Mediaeval Bulgaria. The Bulgarian lands on this map are denoted under the names of *Zagora* in the Dobroudja region (North-eastern Bulgaria), and *Mizia* and *Bulgaria* — in Thrace and Macedonia respectively.

The mentioned maps can be seen on colour photos in the collection of mediaeval navigation maps exhibited in the corridor in front of Room 20.

Another important source of information about that epoch is the information provided by European travellers. Particularly from the end of the 16th century on, when Europe was designing plans for the defeat of the Ottoman Empire many were commissioned by their governments to travel around the Empire and assess the chances for a successful struggle against it. Their diaries and travel notes (about 2,000) are full of information about the political life, the state of the economy, and about important strategic points. The travel notes abound in data about the way of life of the Bulgarians, about their ethnographic peculiarities, about their struggle against the conquerors. What is impressive about these notes is that when describing the situation of the Bulgarian people they invariably stress the Bulgarians' craving for freedom, their deep national feelings, their readiness to join the struggles of the European peoples against the Ottoman Empire. Of particular value are the drawings and sketches accompanying the travel notes. The information submitted by those foreign

travellers played an important part in raising the Eastern Question before West European public opinion.

On the panels in the corridor, where the navigation maps are exhibited, biographical data about some of the better known travellers are on show, as well as excerpts from their diaries.

Cultural Centres

The Ottoman conquest deprived medieval Bulgarian culture of its intelligentsia. Most of the creative elite found favourable soil abroad for propagating the traditions of the Turnovo Literary School, and through its activity enriched the spiritual life of many centuries.

The character of culture during the 15th-17th century was predetermined by the new reality which now lacked the economic, ideological and political factors that had stimulated its development before. Bulgarian culture was no longer official. Its creation passed into the hands of the ordinary people. It was a national, original and democratic culture. It was precisely because of those qualities that Bulgarian culture withstood all the trials and ordeals, protecting like a shield the Bulgarian nationality throughout the centuries.

Under the unbearable conditions of foreign domination, cultural life



74

was mainly concentrated in the monasteries. They became significant cultural and national centres. Numerous old manuscripts were preserved there, new ones were created, the tradition of calligraphy was further developed, a number of frescoes, icons and other remarkable works of applied arts were created. Monastery schools were organized as well, where reading and writing was taught; clergymen and men of letters received their education in the monasteries. In this way these ecclesiastical institutions played a great historical role in the preservation of the keen national consciousness, the language, the national spirit and traditions.

Particularly great is the significance of the monasteries on Mount Athos

74. Collection plate, Master Peter, Chiprovtsi school of goldsmiths, gilt silver, enamel, coloured stones, Bachkovo Monastery, Church of the Assumption, 1644, 42 cm in diameter

which succeeded in preserving their independence and inviolability. They became a unifying centre of the Orthodox peoples and played a guiding role for culture in the Balkans.

The museum exposition includes from the most important cultural centres, represented by their most interesting monuments.

The first part of Room 22 is devoted to the Turnovo cultural centre which zealously preserved the artistic and literary traditions of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. Among the exhibits here are monuments from the village of Arbanassi, from Veliko Turnovo and the Prissovo Monastery.

During the late Middle Ages the village of Arbanassi developed into a trading centre. Its stone houses, resembling mediaeval dwellings, both in size and rich interior decoration, were indicative of the increasing material wealth of their owners. It is a curious fact that in the conditions of foreign domination, over a period of only 150 years (during the 12th and the 18th century), numerous churches were built in Arbanassi, of which 7 are preserved to this day. This further testifies to the town's economic prosperity and in turn show that it was there that the cultural traditions of the former Bulgarian capital of Turnovo found appropriate and favourable soil for further development.

The wall paintings in the oldest and largest Arbanassi Church of the Nativity were done between 1632 and 1649 according to the inscriptions recording donations. Under these murals there is an earlier layer of wall-painting dating back to the 16th century. The 17th century painting here is one of the most interesting and characteristic specimens of that epoch in style and artistic quality, revealing an enrichment and broadening of themes which increases the cognitive principle and heightens ornamental expressiveness. A distinctive novelty is the reproduction of moments connected with everyday life.

The *Last Judgement* scene (71), exhibited at the far end of the room, was painted on the eastern wall of the church's antechamber. The theme, one of the most popular of that epoch, is connected with the people's view of life and death, of the justice of the final judgement over the righteous and the sinful alike. The central space over the entrance is occupied by the scene of Nativity, to the left Hell is depicted with its fiery river, and to the right — Paradise with its four holy rivers. Down below, next to the floor is featured a group of sinners undergoing infernal tortures.

Scenes from daily life incorporated in pictorial art, makes it deeply national in spirit and brings it closer to the people. The scenes *Horo* (a chain dance) and *Musicians* from the same church (copies of which are to be seen on the opposite wall in this part of the room) depict women in local national costumes and the typical local head pieces, while the musicians are playing folk instruments. Popular elements are to be found in the clothes which the founders and donors of the church were painted in (copies of their portraits are on display in the corridor). Ethnographic details are also present in the dress of the ecclesiastical characters. The elements pertaining to everyday life in the works of the painters from that period are another proof of the preserved national feeling.

Certain works belonging to the icon-painting school of the Turnovo cultural centre are also displayed here. All of them were painted within the framework of the traditional iconographic pattern possessing a sophisticated colour harmony and the colour tonality characteristic of the individual icon-painting studios.

The throne cross from Arbanassi (17th century) is another original

75. Bowl, silver, Chiprovtsi school of goldsmiths, second half of the 16th century, 18 cm in diameter

monument of that time. Its artistic realization carries the Renaissance spirit, following the traditions of 14th century art.

The second part of Room 22 includes exhibits from one of the largest cultural centres in this country during the Middle Ages — the Bachkovo Monastery. It was founded in 1083. During Ottoman domination the monastery was repeatedly destroyed but was always built anew. It can be dated to the early 17th century. It was then that the Church of the Assumption, and the refectory — both preserved to the present day — were erected.

The church (built in 1604) is the most noteworthy element of the whole monastery ensemble. Its architectural features are of the Mount Athos type of churches. Its narthex was painted in 1643 by an unknown artist. To the left of the entrance are the images of the donors Georgi and his son Konstantine in rich clothes. Among the exhibits of the exposition is a copy of the donors' portraits.

The monastery refectory dates back to 1601. It is a large semi-circular vaulted room, the walls and vault of which are covered with magnificent frescoes. *The Last Judgement* scene is on the eastern wall. The vault paintings feature biblical and evangelical characters, among which are scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary and various church assemblies. The whole interior of the refectory is in fact a rich art gallery, the only



76. The Cherepish Gospel — embossed plate binding, gilt silver, Masters Nikola and Pala, Chiprovtsi school of goldsmiths, 1612, 30.5 cm high

one of its kind in the country. It is shown on a colour photograph in this room.

Of the monastery treasures that have survived three are on display in the exposition: an offertory in the shape of a five-domed church, a chalice, and a little pitcher. These can be dated to the 17th-18th century and the workmanship typical of the South-Bulgarian gold - and silversmiths, mainly from the town of Plovdiv. All three are made of gilded silver, ornamented by filigree and coloured enamel and inlaid with precious stones.

The room also displays icons from several of the icon-painting centres, mainly of the 17th century. It was precisely then that the art of icon-



painting became more popular and its scope expanded. The works of some of the centres (Nessebur, Bachkovo) adhere to the traditional manner of painting with their refined linear stylization, contrasting colours, and well proportioned composition (72). Other specimens reveal a more schematic and simplified conception of the image. From the 16th and 17th century on, icon-painting increasingly expressed the realistic national traditions.

The earliest preserved woodcut iconostases and which enhance the solemnity of the Christian shrine date back to the 17th century. The woodcut and poly-chromium-plated royal gates, iconostasis friezes and crosses are important elements. On display are monuments from the towns of Plovdiv and Peshtera and the villages of Karloukovo and Arbanassi. Another novelty are the woodcut frames of an intricate profile, the most interesting of which is on display: the frame of the icon of the Virgin Mary on the Throne from the village of Sestrimo. Hagiographical icons became gradually widespread too, on the periphery of which miniature scenes from the life of the icon's patron were painted. *Virgin with Child* from the village of Karloukovo is one such icon. Its impressive popularity lies in the horizontal plan of the composition which the painter has preferred to the traditional vertical plan. Thus breaking the convention, the popular artist has expressed his original concept about and understanding of the



subject. Icons in woodcut frames and hagiographical icons can be seen in the other parts of Room 22, as well as in Room 23.

In the third part of Room 22 there are specimens of articles from the Chiprovtsi goldsmith school. This school gained recognition in the second half of the 16th century and became still more prominent during the 17th century having gained a reputation as the most significant goldsmith school not only in Bulgaria but in the whole of the Balkan peninsula as well. The applied arts and the goldsmith's art in particular have always provided a favourable soil for the flowering of Bulgarian artistic talent. The goldsmith's artifacts from that time preserved the traditional shapes and ornamentations of the preceding epoch. At the same time, however, they were enriched by certain novel Oriental motifs or by elements characteristic of West-European Renaissance. But these were always modified by the original creative individuality of the Bulgarian goldsmiths. Most of the artifacts were created out of a new vision and concept which radically deviated from the conventional pattern. In this respect the Chiprovtsi goldsmith school created works of extraordinary originality.

The appearance and development of the Chiprovtsi goldsmith school (73) is rooted in the economic, political and social conditions in the little town of Chiprovtsi during the 16th and 17th century. The economic prosperity resulting from the exploitation of the then rich ore mines in the vicinity, the local autonomy within the frames of the Ottoman Empire, the rise of the town as an enlightenment and cultural centre — all these favoured the creativeness of the Chiprovtsi goldsmiths. Influenced by the progressive trends and ideas of their time, they created remarkable works, which with their original art were and still are a contribution to the promotion of artistic ideas. The elegantly proportioned form of their works, combined with a precise intaglio outline, the multicoloured enamelling, and skilful filigree workmanship, are a rare example of the unity of artistic and technical craftsmanship.

The workshops of the Chiprovtsi goldsmith school were widely spread over the territory of North-western Bulgaria. After the defeat of the Chiprovtsi Uprising (1688), the towns of Vidin and Vratsa continued the Chiprovtsi goldsmiths' tradition. The works of the Chiprovtsi goldsmiths' art were readily accepted in the neighbouring Balkan lands. The Chiprovtsi goldsmiths worked to orders commissioned by monasteries in Romania and Serbia. Chiprovtsi silver and Chiprovtsi cups were highly valued and were much in demand on many foreign markets. The appearance of the Chiprovtsi goldsmith products at other goldsmith centres resulted in the borrowing of the original Chiprovtsi craftsmanship and this contributed to the promotion of the goldsmith's craft all over the Balkans.

The church was the chief commissioner of goldsmiths' products. Orders from churches resulted in magnificent throne crosses, church offertories, ecclesiastical book bindings, and church plates. For secular use the goldsmiths created jewellery, cups, various casings and platings. From the wide range of works the Chiprovtsi goldsmith school created, the museum has on show the best examples. One of the most beautiful works from Chiprovtsi is the collection plate from the Bachkovo Monastery, known also as the Chiprovtsi collection plate (74). Made of gilt silver, it is a round shallow plate with a wide periphery. In relief, on the bottom is presented the "life-giving source" composition. On the outer side, the decorative element represents an inscription in Church-Slavonic, which gives the year it was made — 1644, the donor's name — Theodosii from the town of Peshtera, and the name of the craftsman — Master Peter. On the vertical

77. Tetraevangelia, 16th century

wall of the vessel, 19 figures reproduce the legend about the precursors of Christ, and on its periphery the seventeen wrought compositions illustrate scenes from the life of Christ. The vessel is richly adorned with enamel and precious stones. The fine workmanship displays a sophisticated feeling for shape and ornamentation. This highly original plate is the only one of its kind exemplifying the goldsmiths' work of the 17th century in this country.

An exquisite example of the art of the Chiprovtsi goldsmiths is the silver crosier, made in 1612 by the craftsmen Nikola and Kostadin for the Turnovo metropolitan Bishop Gavriil. The crosier is 163 cm long and consists of five octagonal parts joined by screws hidden in balls. The four lower parts are decorated with geometrical and plant ornaments. An inscription is engraved in the uppermost part with the names of the craftsmen, the year it was made and an indication as to whom the crosier was made for. There are two dragon-like heads at the top of the handle. Wrought on the face of the handle in high relief are the Crucifixion and Baptism scenes as well as images of the Evangelists and several saints.

The museum collection also includes artistic bindings and embossed plates. Among the exhibits on display in the room are: the embossed plates of the Cherepish Monastery Gospel (76), made by the craftsmen Nikola and Pala in 1612, that of the Stip Gospel (1696), by master Kos-



78. Pages from the Dragalevtsi Gospel, Church of the Assumption, Dragalevtsi Monastery, 1534, 278 sheets

tadin, the binding of a Gospel made by unknown masters in 1673. The metal binding of the Gospel from Suchava, made by master Ivan Yanov (1656) is exhibited in Room 23.

Among the crosses on display, of particular interest is the cross made by the craftsmen Nikola and Pala in 1601 for the Kassinets Monastery near the town of Vratsa. It is made of silver-plated wood. What is characteristic about it are the domed edifices affixed to the shoulders of the cross and the originally shaped stand with a big ball on which medallion engravings represent evangelical scenes. Below the horizontal shoulder of the cross on both sides there are stylized images of lions. This cross is

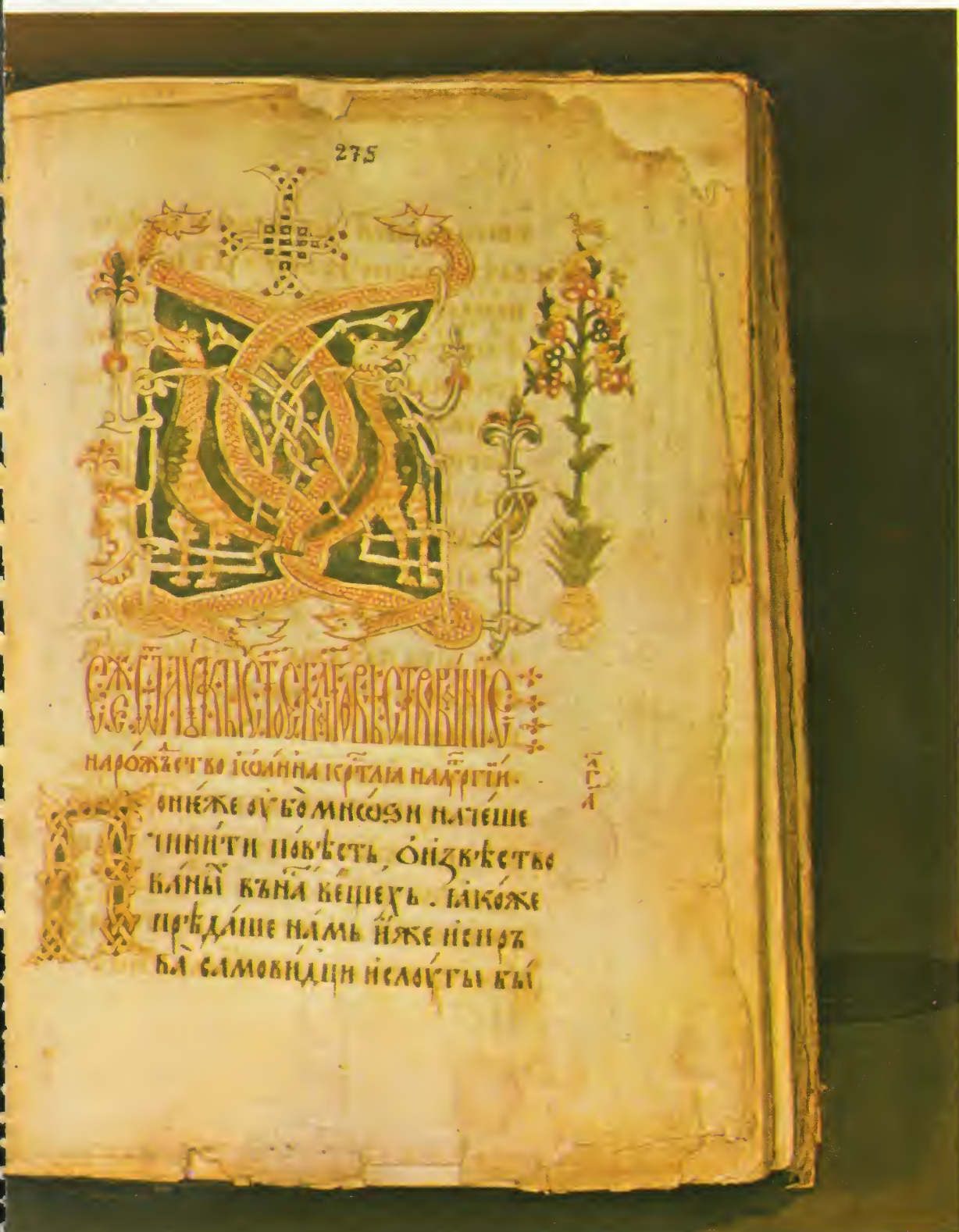


typical of the Chiprovtsi throne crosses whose distinctive features are the architectural shapes.

The image of the Bulgarian national saint Ivan of Rila can be seen on a large silver chalice (1628). The gilded offertory in the shape of a church building was made in the 17th century for the Sts Konstantine and Elena Church in Vratsa; typical of that epoch are the silver bowls (75), popular during the second half of the 16th and the 17th centuries. These are the famous Chiprovtsi cups which were traded by the biggest merchants in the Balkans. They were used both in everyday life and for religious rituals. The sheath casings from the treasures found near the village of Glavanovtsi, Mihailovgrad district also belong to Chiprovtsi craftsmen. They are on display in Room 21.

The several treasures of jewellery displayed in the room attest to the variety and range of the Chiprovtsi school of goldsmiths. The many types of ornamented tiaras, earrings, belts, hairpins, rings and bracelets all differing in shape, ornamentation and workmanship were a worthy addition to women's apparel and reflected the Bulgarian woman's constant desire for beauty.

The exhibits in the fourth and last part of Room 22 are representative of some of the cultural centres in the Western Bulgarian lands — Sofia, Etropolé, Kratovo, Vratsa.



Cultural life in the western territories was considerably more intensive during the 15th and the 16th centuries, since those parts of the country suffered less severely from Ottoman oppression. This was due to their proximity to Serbia, which up to the middle of the 15th century was still enjoying freedom, and they were under the considerable influence of the independent Ohrid episcopate.

Sofia, with the monasteries around it (Dragalevski, Kremikovski, Kokalyanski, Lozenski, Kourilovski), stood out as a prominent cultural centre back in the second half of the 15th century. Its prominence increased during the 16th century. The town itself was very important within the Ottoman Empire. It was the seat of a large administrative area, and a busy trade centre, situated as it was on the main road to Central Europe. Literary life in Sofia was outstanding and lively, bearing the characteristic peculiarities of the 16th century. A literary school was established, the works of which were distinguished by the realistic trend penetrating medieval literature. They reflected the people's resistance against the invaders. The growing patriotic consciousness was more vividly expressed. Those new ideas were best developed in the life record genre. The fate of the martyrs from Sofia — Nikola Novi and Georgi Novi — became the subject of the most significant literary works, connected with the names of the outstanding writers Matei Grammatik and priest Peyo (their works are exhibited in Room 20).

A number of skilful copyists of liturgical books, panegyrics and edifying sermons worked in Sofia and its vicinities. The Gospel from Dragalevtzi (78), on display in the room, was copied in 1534. Other literary monuments from the western territories of the country can also be seen among the exhibits. They are beautifully laid out and interspersed with special headings, initials and miniatures. Some of these works, highlighting the interest towards the life records of the Bulgarian saints Petka Turnovksa, Ivan of Rila, Illarion Muglenski, testify to the elevated patriotic feelings of their authors.

Sofia gladly and readily accepted a large number of books printed in

79. Icon — Old Testament Trinity, Masters Nedyalko Zograph from Lovech, wood, distemper, the Monastery of the Holy Trinity in Etropolé, 1598, 92 cm high

the 16th century in Venice and Tsetina. Yakov Kraikov, the first Bulgarian printer, noted with pride that he was born in Sofia. He worked in Venice, which rose to prominence as one of the major centres of South-Slavonic book-printing. Several of the first printed books are on display in the museum exposition.

Sofia also got established as a centre of goldsmiths. The preserved embossed plates of liturgical books and other church plate exemplify the experience and artistry of the goldsmiths (77). Most of them signed their works which is a proof of their high self-awareness. Matei, the Goldsmith, one of the famous Sofia goldsmiths, is the author of a unique Gospel binding, made in 1581. The front side shows the crucifix, and the opposite side — Christ's resurrection. The figures are exquisitely modelled, the workmanship is magnificent, breathing the spirit of the Renaissance. Goldsmith Velo is the author of the binding of the Dragalevtsi Gospel (1648). Master Andrea created a beautiful bowl-cup (1597). All the above mentioned works are on display in the room.

From the monasteries around Sofia, which formed the so-called Little Mount Athos, the room exhibits replicas and originals of the wall-paintings from the Dragalevski, Kremikovski and Seslavski monasteries. The Church of the Holy Virgin at the Dragalevski Monastery and the Kremikovtsi Church of St George are the earliest churches with wall-paintings after



the invasion of the Bulgarian lands. The 15th century frescoes followed the best traditions of the preceding epoch and in a certain sense are a continuation of official 14th-century art.

The mural paintings from the Church of St Nicholas, the Miracle Worker at the Seslavtsi Monastery are associated with the name of the outstanding artist Pimen Zografski. They are remarkable for the broad scope of their themes, for the mastery of their composition, the dexterous outline of the drawing, qualities that place them among the best of that time.

During the second half of the 16th and the 17th century the Etropolé Varovitets Monastery also got established as a literary and artistic centre. The manuscripts written by men of letters from Etropolé brought to the fore a new characteristic manner of calligraphy, the letters being of a medium semi-official type. The most prominent among the literary men was monk Danail. His literary works, as well as those of the Etropolé literary school, mark the barely perceptible but steady influx of the vernacular, which got established as the literary language. Works from the Etropolé literary school are on display in the exposition.

The museum exposition presents for the first time a large part of the works created at the Etropolé studio for icon-painting. They all date back to the 17th and 18th centuries. As pictorial works of art, the icons from Etropolé are marked by all the features characteristic of icon-painting of that time. Their large number is a proof of the lively creative activity of a wide circle of painters who worked mostly at the Varovitets Monastery. Those artists share a distinctive common feature — their strongly manifested national consciousness: the icon descriptions are in Bulgarian, they show a clear preference for painting the Bulgarian national saints, their works contain elements of the everyday way of life of their contemporaries.

In the 16th and 17th centuries there were some icons which were dated and signed (80). That was further evidence of the high self-awareness and confidence of the Bulgarian painters at that time. The exposition includes some of the earliest signed icons. Of special interest among them is the elegant work of Nedyalko Zograf (79) — *Old Testament Trinity* (1598). This icon is strongly reminiscent of certain Russian 15th-16th century icons, and most of all of the *Old Testament Trinity* of Andrei Rublyov.

The village of Kratovo was another important cultural centre during the 15th and 16th centuries. The most prominent figure there was priest Yoan Kratovski (16th century) who superbly copied and illustrated a large number of books. His miniatures disclose a greater freedom of imagination and the use of original primitive elements characteristic of folk art, which lend his work a peculiar freshness and expressiveness. The literary heritage of priest Yoan on display in the museum exposition includes: *Tetraevangelia* (1567) and a *Service Book* (1567). The *Tetraevangelia* of 1578 is the work of his student, priest Peter, another remarkable painter of miniatures.

In the late 16th century homiletic (*damascin*) literature appeared in the Bulgarian lands. The homilies contained translated sermons of the Greek writer Damascin Studitis, the subject-matter of which was of a religious, ethical and edifying nature. Translated in the spoken new Bulgarian language they read easily and soon became popular reading. The earliest translations of Damascin's works were made at the Rila Monastery. The scholarly monks from that monastery were among the most prominent homiletic writers. Other known authors of homilies were teacher Nedyalko, and his son Filip. Among the most popular books of collected homilies were the *Troyan Collection* (17th century) and the *Elena Collection* (17th century) which are on show.

80. Icon — Virgin Hodegetria with Apostles, wood, distemper, the Church of St Nicholas, Vratsa, 1695, 92 cm high

The art of the late Middle Ages highlights the development and wide popularity of several topics which played an exceedingly important role in consolidating and maintaining the national consciousness of the Bulgarian people. Such topics for instance are: *National Saints* and *Portraits of Donors*.

The national saints sustained the spirit of the Bulgarian of that epoch, giving him a worthy example of how nationality and faith were to be defended. Their very portrayal was an expression of patriotism and high national consciousness. The images of Ivan of Rila, Yoakim Sarandaporski, Prohor Pshinski, St Cyril, the Philosopher, are shown in the murals, icons, church plate and liturgical books.

The donors — local notables who donated funds for the erection, renovation and decoration of churches and monasteries — thus expressed their loyalty to the religion they were born into. From the late 15th century on individual or group family portraits of donors occupied an increasingly larger space in churches.

On the left side of the corridor in front of Room 22 are displayed replicas of the portraits of national saints and donors featured in murals.

Several monuments of the art of stone-cutting are shown on the other side of the corridor. During the late Middle Ages the stone-cutting tradition was discontinued. There was no stone-cutting on public buildings as



there had been in the past. Stone-cuttings were not allowed by the conquerors and were therefore rarely used.

On show are two reliefs carved on limestone blocks. They tell the story of a battle fought by two horsemen in which the enemy is crushed; the second relief shows the victor. These reliefs are executed with great artistry, while the battle scene is dynamic, the portrayal of the triumphant horseman suggests a peculiar solemnity. The two stone reliefs decorated one of the gates to the Kaliakra Fortress, and can be dated back to the second half of the 14th century or the middle of the 15th century.

Of the exhibited sepulchral monuments most interesting from a historical point of view and as works of art are the three tombstones originating from the ancient village of Fakia, Bourgas district. They belong to the Bimbelov family whose forefather was Momchil voivode. The stone-cutter has successfully portrayed the deceased and has symbolically suggested their trade. Thus we realize that one of them had been a farmer, the second a scholar. The third — Marincho Vulkov (the Fearful) is depicted on horseback, carrying the family relics — a leather bag and a fur cap, which the Sultan had given as a present to his grandfather — and he is wearing a band given him by the Swedish King Carl XII for having accompanied him in his flight from Russia to Constantinople.

The Rila Monastery stands out as the largest cultural and educational centre both in the late Middle Ages, and during the period of the National Revival. Room 22 is entirely devoted to the monastery.

It was founded in the 10th century in the area where its patron — the hermit Ivan of Rila — spent his secluded life. In the 14th century the monastery consolidated and expanded. It was the time when the local ruler Hrelyo, who had taken monastic vows, renovated the monastery buildings and next to them erected a tower for the purposes of defence (1355). On its uppermost floor is the Transfiguration Chapel consisting of two domed chambers. On display in the room is a replica of the fresco from the vault of the eastern chamber of the chapel. The whole length of the surface unfolds the composition "Sophia, Supreme Wisdom of

81. Iconostasis, Rila Monastery, Church of St Lucas the Evangelist, 19th century

God". The wall-painting represents a complete spatially decorative system with a solemn impact. (Hrelyo's throne and the tower gate are exhibited in the lobby on the first floor of the museum).

After the Bulgarian lands were conquered by the Ottoman Turks, the Rila Monastery received special royal decrees which guaranteed its rights. The restoration and renovation of the monastery began in the middle of the 15th century. From that time on it established itself as an important cultural and educational centre. Several factors contributed to the rise of the Rila Monastery to its leading position: the convenient geographic location, its material independence, and its high rank in the church hierarchy.

The monastery played a great role during the long centuries of foreign domination. It kept up the Bulgarians' patriotic consciousness and self-awareness, consolidated their love for their mother tongue and faith, preserved the people's memory of their history and established cultural relations with other Christian Orthodox lands. One of the most important activities of the monastery was the popularization of the cult for the Bulgarian saint Ivan of Rila. An important contribution to this end was the return of the saint's remains from Turnovo in 1469. The cult for relics at that time was a positive factor since they symbolized the Christian faith. The conveyance of Ivan of Rila's relics turned into a patriotic

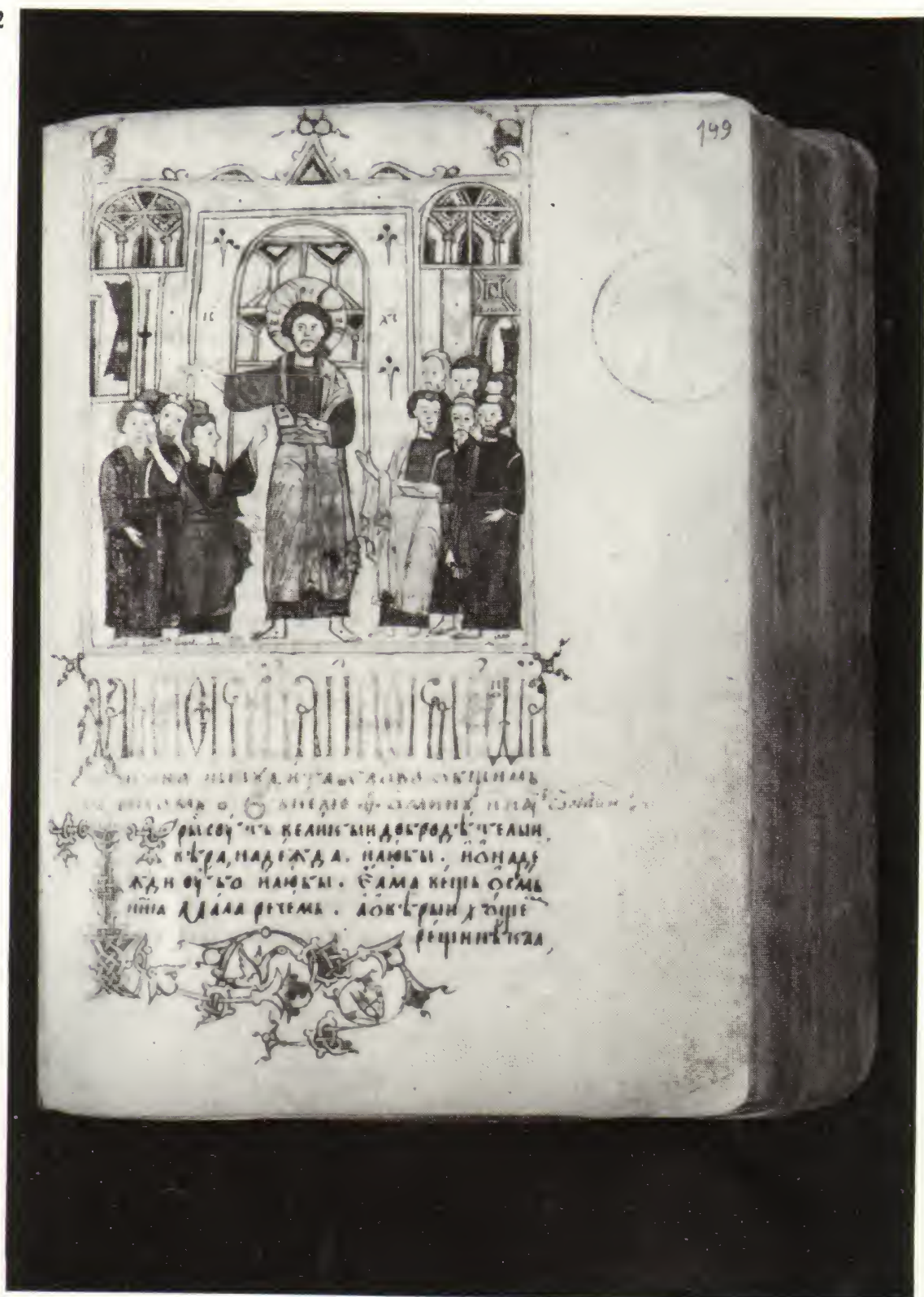


demonstration, into a stimulus towards national consciousness. This event was embodied in a number of artistic and literary works such as the Rila novel by the writer Vladislav Grammatik, a contemporary of the event, the numerous wood cuts and prints (exhibited next to the entrance to the room), the wall-painting Conveyance of the Relics in the main monastery church (a replica of which is on show). The exposition includes the popular life record of Ivan of Rila of the 15th century (which in fact is a copy of an older life record of the saint), valuable also for the folklore elements it contains.

During the second half of the 15th century the Rila Monastery was established as the most prolific literary centre of all. Vladislav Grammatik, Dimiter Kantakuzin, Mardarii, Spiridon worked here. Their writings revealed the strength and firm character of the Christian martyrs and were an appeal to defend and preserve Bulgarian national integrity. On display in the exposition is a *Panegyric*, written in 1483.

Yosif the Bearded had a prominent place among the Rila Monastery homiletic writers. His *Rila Monastery Homilies* of the 17th century is on show. This is a large manuscript of 413 pages and 19 illustrations. Its miniatures reflect elements borrowed from primitive applied popular arts (82).

The schools, the Rila Monastery maintained throughout the Bulgarian



lands trained teachers whose activity was aimed to elevate the national consciousness and the spirit of the population.

The contacts and relations that the Rila Monastery established with neighbouring nations and the free Orthodox lands (Mount Athos, the Wallachian principalities and Russia in particular) greatly influenced and stimulated its overall development as a cultural centre and had a beneficial influence on Bulgarian culture as a whole. Back in 1466 a contract was concluded with the Russian monastery of St Panthaleimon on Mount Athos by virtue of which the two monasteries formed a single unity and were mutually bound to assist each other should the need arise. The contract is on display in one of the cases.

The Rila Monastery played a particularly significant role as mediator in Bulgarian-Russian relations during the 16th and the 17th century. The monks of the Rila Monastery visited Russia for the purpose of collecting grants and aids and thus were able to meet with religious personalities, officials, and Russian statesmen. This gave birth to the hope and confidence that Russia would contribute to the deliverance of the Bulgarians from foreign oppression.

Cultural relations with Russia and the Balkan states are reflected in the exposition in several remarkable monuments. Here is the Gospel from Suchava, written by the monk Makarius at the Putna Monastery (Romania) in 1529 and first presented to the Church of the Holy Virgin in the village of Suchava, and then more than a century later, handed over to the Rila Monastery. On display in the room is the personal seal of monk Grigorii of Rila which was used in the aid-collection programme in Russia in 1558-1559.

Other specimens of the artistic wealth which the Rila monastery has preserved over the centuries exhibited in the exposition are: the iconostasis from the Church of St Lucas the Evangelist (81) at the St. Lucas hermitage, as well as various church plates created by Bulgarian artistic genius, and several icons. Among these one is captivated by the icon St Ivan of Rila with scenes from his life from the beginning of the 18th century. What makes it interesting is the way it reproduces scenes from the life of the saint.

In the late 18th century the Rila Monastery started the first printing workshop in the country, on the model of the printing workshops at the Mount Athos and Sinai monasteries. The earliest prints for the monastery were engraved in Vienna (1791) and Moscow (1792). The prints most frequently reproduced the image of the monastery patron — Ivan of Rila with scenes from his life, as well as a view of the monastery. Later the images of other saints appeared, reproductions of religious scenes and others. Thousands of reproductions were made and their low price made them accessible to all. Thus the prints gained wide popularity and contributed to the formation of the aesthetic tastes of the population.

In the corridor next to the entrance to Room 23 a collection of prints from the Revival period is on display. The case exhibits various printing cuts and clichés.

82. A page from the Rila Damascine, Rila Monastery, second half of the 17th century, 413 sheets



Bulgarian National Revival

Economic and Cultural Development

The New Bulgarian Education Movement

The Struggle for an Independent National Church

National Revolutionary Movement

The Liberation of Bulgaria

The Bulgarian National Revival section of the National History Museum starts in Room 23. It covers the period from the beginning of the 18th century to the Liberation in 1878. The National Revival period saw the formation of bourgeois socio-economic relations and the consolidation of the Bulgarian nation. The struggle of the nation against a foreign spiritual and political yoke led to the growth of the national enlightenment, a national culture and a national revolutionary ideology.

Economic and Cultural Development

The economic problems which developed in the Bulgarian lands in the first half of the 18th century were the result of the deepening crisis in the military and feudal Ottoman Empire and marked the beginning of the National Revival Period. Its expansion to the West having been blocked, the Ottoman Empire was being seriously threatened by the growing power of the Russian Empire and as a result was forced to give the Western countries the opportunity for wide economic penetration. New contracts were signed and trade increased. Pan-Balkan and local markets began to be formed. The towns of Vidin, Svishtov, Nikopol, Lom and Roussé on the Danube, Syar and Prilep in Macedonia, and Odrin, Plovdiv, Sliven and Tatar-Pazardjik in Thrace developed as trade centres. These changes are shown on a large map at the beginning of the exhibition.

Visitors can also see collections of foreign coins which were then in circulation in the Ottoman Empire, the personal seals and belongings of Bulgarian merchants and large photographs of contemporary engravings showing some of the early Bulgarian economic centres.

The large photographs and copies of the portraits of church benefactors from the monasteries on Mount Athos show the Bulgarians who made their fortunes in the middle of the 18th century. The Rila Monastery and the Hilendar and Zograph monasteries on Mount Athos developed as centres which inspired the awakening Bulgarian nation. The traditional forms of worship became an expression of national self-awareness. The large numbers of monks from the monasteries organised the education and the cultural and spiritual life of the people. That is why the most prominent cultural figures of this period — the 18th century Bulgarian preachers Yossif Bradati (Joseph the Bearded), the priest Todor of Vratsa, Paissi of Hilendar, hieromonk Spiridon, Sophroni of Vratsa and others, came from the clergy.

The Bulgarian homilies of the 18th century, specimens of which are on display, were written in the vernacular and marked the beginning of the transition to New Bulgarian literature. These writings are dominated by the new ideas of the enlightenment and patriotic feelings and often con-

tained elements of a new, humanistic view of man. Next of the Bulgarian homilies is the famous *Stemmatography* of Hristofor Zhefarovich published in Vienna in 1741. Inspired by Illyrism and deep patriotism, H. Zhefarovich in his book gave the coats of arms of 56 states frequently mixing ancient provinces and emerging nations in Eastern Europe, as well as of Bulgarian and Serbian saints and optimistic and patriotic poems.

Room 24 gives pride of place to Paissi's "Slav-Bulgarian History" (83). This history of the Slav-Bulgarian people is the most important historical work of the 18th century. It is important not only as a new stage in the development of the new Bulgarian literature but also as an expression of the new times. Paissi was the first who, defending the origin of his nation, characterized the national language and the lands of the Bulgarians and aroused an awareness of cultural and national unity and of pride in the glorious past of the Bulgarian people. Free from foreign influence he set a democratic line in the Bulgarian national liberation movement.

In 1762 Paissi finished his epochal work and set out to spread it throughout the Bulgarian lands. The first transcript of Paissi's work, made in 1765 by Sophroni of Vratsa in Kotel, has been preserved. This is a manuscript of great importance and the only one of the many transcripts which explicitly states that it has been copied from the original. The Slav-Bulgarian History exerted an enormous influence on the development of the National Revival. Copies of it were made until as late as the 80s of the 19th century and for more than a century it was the constant companion of the elite of the Bulgarian nation. Transcripts of it were made by outstanding National Revival figures such as Petko R. Slaveikov, Vassil Aprilov and Neophit Bozveli, Georgi S. Rakovski and Marin Drinov acknowledged the contribution made by the Hilandar monk.

During the National Revival period, the Bulgarian people who had preserved their identity and national self-awareness during the first three centuries of Ottoman domination, became a nation. The economic development, the formation of a national bourgeoisie and especially the unification of all Bulgarian lands by common economic links and the establishment of a national market were decisive factors in this process.

Back in the 18th century the large annual and seasonal fairs became an important uniting force in the growth of an independent Bulgarian economy. There, the products of the Bulgarian craftsmen and farmers had to compete with European ones and it was there that not only goods but also ideas were first exchanged, thus strengthening the national feeling (84). The exhibition shows some of the goods sold at the famous Uzoundjov fair which like the fairs in the towns of Nevrokop, Dolyan, Sliven and Syar played an important role in the formation of an integrated all-Bulgarian market.

Further on, in the same Room, documentary materials show that the decline of the military feudal system — the mainstay of the Ottoman state in the Bulgarian lands — which took place during the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th century, brought about important changes in the landowning system. Large landed estates called *chiflitsi* were formed and their produce was sold on local markets or exported. The free *raetsko* system of landownership with property deeds or the so called *tappii*, established itself as the basic form. An agrarian reform was carried out in the '30s as a result of which the *spahiis* (Ottoman feudal landholders) were gradually separated from the land, becoming state officials of independent means. The 1858 Land Law actually recognised the right to private land ownership.

More serious attempts to modernize agriculture were made in the period after the Crimean War when the first machines were imported, the first agrarian funds organized, and specialized agricultural literature published.

The successful development of capitalist relations in the towns and villages was seriously hampered by the Ottoman feudal system. The lack of a legal system and property rights forced the Bulgarian population to seek less restricted forms of economic activity in the towns and beyond the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. The original documents shown at the exhibition — the Memorandum by the citizens of Pleven to Midhad Pasha (85) in connection with the tax increases of 1867, affixed with the signatures and seals of the distinguished citizens of Pleven and the Sultan's

83. *Istoria Slavyanobolgarskaya* (Slav-Bulgarian History). The oldest known transcript made by Sophroni of Vratsa from the original of Paissi of Hilendar in 1765. Paper, 88 pp

Firman (Royal Decree) in connection with the complaint from the citizens of Kazanluk against the tax increases of 1828 — prove that the heavy taxation literally sapped the economic strength of the people.

In order to appease popular discontent and to avert the spread of the revolutionary movement on the Balkan Peninsula, in which the Bulgarians took an active part, at the beginning of the 1820s the Ottoman Empire introduced the so-called Age of Reforms. In spite of the fact that many reforms remained only on paper, they had a favourable influence on the development of the economy in the towns. The ledgers recording the incomes and the expenditures of merchants, craftsmen, etc., which visitors

ВЪВРЕМЯ БПІКПА ГЕДІОНА :

Записаше сѣю исторіица, азъ мнози
губшій вѣлѣхъ стоица іерей :
вѣлѣто повѣлѣніе гдѣ нашъ іисъ хъ
спіи вѣцъ ипрѣо дѣви іпріи : ѿ ѿ хъ

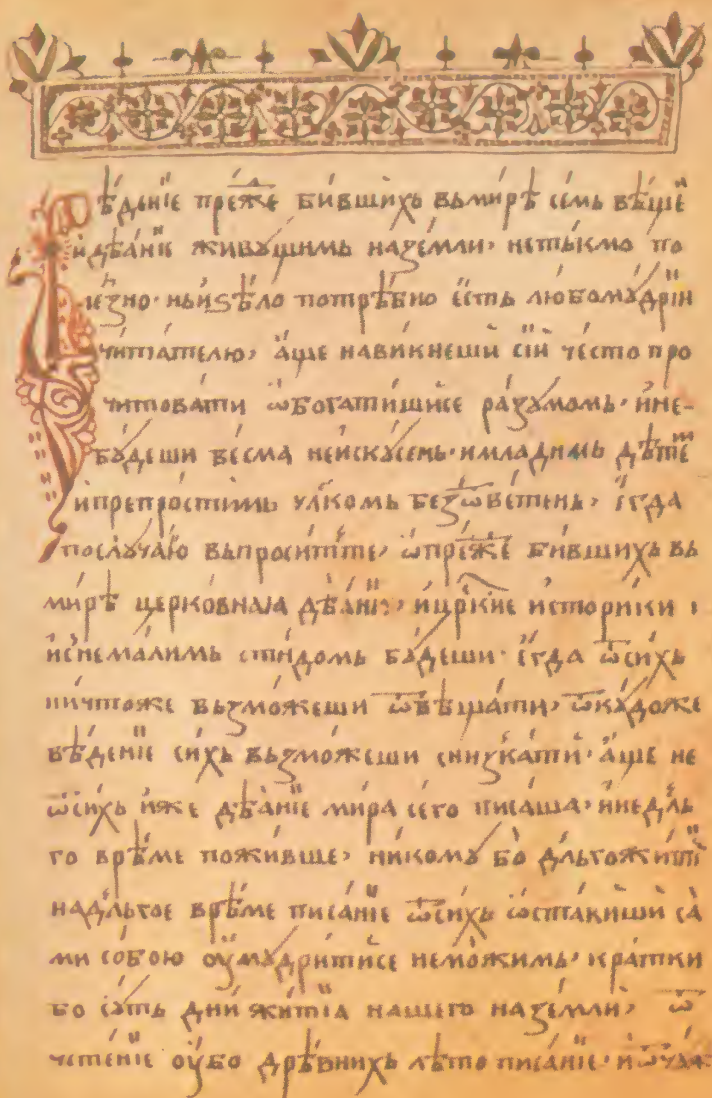
ЛѢТО ШАДІАНА ШЕХІДАНІЕ ВСЕГО МІРА: 5500
МЦЬ АЙНХАРІА ВЪ КѢ ДНЬ:

Сѣи исторію принеся паче сѣи - іермонахъ ѿ
сѣи гора афонская и прегрѣхѣи хѣи копіи
настоиатель епитропоу црковни христу покла
и постави охрѣи сѣи апла пѣтра и пав
кон чипіе дарителю бѣи апроути кон пис
и кон настоиатель ;

нѣкогда ѡсвои́ илѣ шкрати́ дасъ а́ борисань нѣр
лѣтъ шѣа вѣа савѣда́ нѣа вѣа аплѣнъ нѣа птѣ
нѣа чѣстїри еѡлѣпті. нѣа пѣтъ нѣа смѣзо нѣа
дасъ спѣти тѣа нѣа вѣвѣкн :

can see, are a valuable source of information about the economic activities of various representatives of the Bulgarian middle class and petty bourgeoisie.

Next to them visitors can see some of the products of the crafts industries which are also on show in the ethnographic part of the museum (86). In the middle of the 19th century some 100 crafts were practised in the Bulgarian lands. The towns of Gabrovo, Koprivshtitsa, Kalofer, Sliven, Kotel, Karlovo, Sopot, Kazanluk, Pirdop, Panagyurishtë, Samokov, Plovdiv, Turnovo, Tatar-Pazardjik, Haskovo, Shoumen, Ohrid and Teven developed as large centres for the production of *abi* (coarse woollen cloaks), homespun, woollen braids, carpets, leather, weapons, copper utensils, gold articles, sugar, soap and ironware, earthenware and wooden articles. Guilds were gradually formed and by the 1840s they were already carrying out not only economic but also social functions. The guild-members took an active part in the self-government of the parishes, rendered financial aid to the Bulgarian schools and struggled for an independent Bulgarian Church. The museum has on display numerous valuable objects, inscribed by the benefactors (87), which were donated by the guild organisations or by their representatives to the Bulgarian schools and to the all-Bulgarian religious centres. Memorial plaques and copies of their portraits are evidence of the material aid rendered by the benefactors.



Вѣдѣніе прѣже бѣвшихъ въ мирѣ сѣмъ вѣщѣ
и дѣланіи живущимъ на земли, не токмо по
и зноу, но и сѣло потребно естъ любомудрін
и тщателью, аще навикнеши сѣи тѣсто про
итовати и обогатѣиши се разумомъ, и не
бѣдиши всѣма неискѣсьми и младѣи дѣтѣ
и претростѣи убокомъ бѣзъ вѣстѣи, гдѣ
послѣдуаю въпросити, и прѣже бѣвшихъ въ
мирѣ церковна дѣланіи, и цркви исторіи,
и немалымъ сподомъ бѣдѣши, гдѣ бѣшихъ
ничтоже възможеша и вѣрати, и хощахъ
вѣдѣніи ихъ възможеша и иже капи, аще не
бѣшихъ иже дѣланіи мира сего писаша, и не дѣ
го вѣмѣ поживше, никома бо дѣлѣ жити
надѣлѣтое вѣмѣ писаніи бѣшихъ и спѣахъ сѣ
ми собою оумудрити не можима, кратки
бо естъ дни житія нашего на земли, и
чтеніи оубо древнихъ лѣто писаніи, и оумуд

In spite of numerous patriarchal conventions, the guilds were instrumental in the development of national industry. The more successful craftsmen set up workshops employing 25—30 workers, examples of the simple capitalist cooperative. In the 1830s, thanks to the experience and capital which the craftsmen had accumulated larger and centralized woollen textile manufactories appeared in the districts of Plovdiv and Peshtera. Woollen braid (*gaitan*) manufactories equipped with a greater number of hydraulically operated braiders were set up in the sub-Balkan towns and in Gabrovo. Visitors can see an original braider with 20 axels which dates back to the middle of the 19th century and comes from the town of Gabrovo.

A modern engraving hung at the far end of the room shows the first Bulgarian factory founded by Dobri Zhelyazkov in 1835. This modern broadcloth factory quickly became a prosperous enterprise employing 500 workers but it was soon confiscated by the Ottoman state.

It was not until the '60s and the '70s of the 19th century that Bulgarian industry became well established. About 35 factories producing broadcloth, alcohol, glass and processing leather and farm products were opened. The steam-operated flour mills and rose-distilleries functioned as capitalist enterprises.

As an illustration of the goods manufactured at that time the museum has an original collection of glassware produced at the Anton Utenberg's factory in Samokov. The case opposite contains interesting documents and examples of correspondence between Bulgarian firms and joint-stock companies.

In the 19th century, the Bulgarian town developed as an economic and trade centre and as a cradle of the National Revival. The newly acquired wealth of the citizens, the new organization of the economic and cultural life and the growing national self-awareness left their mark on urban development and architecture and determined the image of the National Revival town.

Clock towers, the mechanisms of which were mostly of Bulgarian make, rose above the newly-formed town squares and markets and above the central shopping streets and workshops as a symbol of the new age. One of these unique clock mechanisms is on display. Inns and caravansaries, water fountains and baths were built in the towns. In the 1830s new schools and churches, strongholds against Greek influence, began to be built everywhere.

The Revival towns, the architectural ensembles, some of which have survived in the towns of Zheravna, Koprivshtitsa and in other towns, greatly impressed the foreigners who travelled in our lands in the 19th century. The corridor to Room is hung with original water colours by the Hungarian scientist Felix Kanitz (88). From 1860 to 1880 he travelled mainly in Northern Bulgaria and in the sub-Balkan plains and his studies on Bulgarian ethnography, history and geography are summarized in his great work *Danubian Bulgaria and the Balkans*. During his travels Felix Kanitz accumulated many drafts, sketches, maps and geographical diagrams, photographs, drawings and pictures documenting and illustrating life at that time. The rich archives kept at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences also show that he was interested in ancient and contemporary sculpture and in old Bulgarian art.

During Ottoman rule, sculpture, which flourished in Medieval Bulgaria, lost its social footing and monumental character. Without the official patronage of the state and the ecclesiastical authorities it developed as

84. *Berat* for free trading issued to the Kazanluk merchant Manyo Stoyanov, 1832, paper, 86 cm long

یا در طاعت دعا خواند و در روز و شب

در وقت غایت و کاف و کاف و کاف و کاف

در وقت غایت و کاف و کاف و کاف و کاف

در وقت غایت و کاف و کاف و کاف و کاف



purely folk art. Tombstone sculpture and sculpture as a decorative element in architecture were most widely spread in the 18th and 19th century.

The museum has a rich collection of original tombstones from that period. Biblical motifs and symbolically represented Christian ideas are reproduced on enormous blocks. The tombstones which show objects used in everyday life and scenes depicting the trade of the deceased are of great interest.

Sculptured ornaments also decorated the facades and the portals of churches, as well as bridges and water fountains. Skilled stonemasons from different parts of the country created an expressive and lively art in which biblical motifs were combined with elements from the ancient cult of the sun and heathen beliefs. Plant and animal images as well as images of fantastic creatures and human figures, stylized and intertwined in different compositions, decorated the water fountains in the towns of Sandanski and Sopot, the church arches in the town of Gorna Oryahovitsa and in the villages of Divlya and Lobosh (Pernik district) as well as the windows in the village of Turgovishté near Belogradchik. Exact copies of these have been made and are now on show at the exhibition.

A special part of the exhibition is devoted to the household of the Bulgarians and their clothes. This is one of the most interesting parts of the museum. In the 18th and the 19th centuries the interior of the Bulgarian home changed. New, richly ornamented buildings rose to replace the small one-storey houses. Frequently, the first floors of these houses were used as workshops. The two- and three-storey houses were built as architectural ensembles with several wings broken up by bays and overhanging verandahs, and they were richly ornamented with woodwork and wall-paintings. By means of various plant motifs such as vases with flowers, festoons and bouquets and by means of landscapes and more complicated compositions, the National Revival artists imparted beauty and cosiness to their homes and to those of their wealthy fellow-citizens. The original copies taken from the house of the Samokov icon-painter Hristo Yovevich, as well as the copies of the works of the famous National Revival painters Stanislav Dospevski and Nikola Obrazopissov, stand out among the copies of mural paintings displayed in the museum. Unpretentious in their execution, these types of mural paintings show the ornamental system characteristic of this period and reflect the taste and the growing aesthetic requirements of the nascent Bulgarian bourgeoisie.

Woodwork ornaments were very popular during the National Revival. Woodwork braids decorated the cupboards, shelves, wash-basins and closets. The wealthier craftsmen and merchants ordered magnificent carved wooden ceilings for their drawing rooms. Two of these remarkable works of architecture and the art of woodcarving are reproduced in Room 31. On entering the hall visitors will see on their left a reproduction of the carved wooden ceiling from one of the rooms of the famous Daskalov house in the town of Tryavna, built at the turn of the 19th century by Dimiter Oshanetsa. According to one legend the master and his assistant had a wager as to who could produce the best woodcarved ceiling in the two rooms on the upper floor. For six months each one worked on his woodcarving in isolation. The wager was won by Dimiter Oshanetsa with his unrivalled Tryavna Sun.

The other restored room in the exposition is that from the Yorgov House (89) in the town of Teteven, which is a fine illustration of the way of life and the tastes of the Bulgarians during the 18th century. Towards the end of the 18th century, the citizens of Teteven became extremely prosperous. But the rich Altun (Golden) Teteven was ruined and reduced to ashes by the Kurdjalis in 1801. Only the Yorgov house remained as a mute witness to those troubled times.

Wood imparted warmth and cosiness to the houses in the towns and villages in the Pirin Mountains. The exquisite carved ceiling of the so-called Bouinov House in the town of Bansko which belonged to Nikola Todev dates back to the middle of the 19th century. The accurate copy of this interesting work of art completes the collection in Room 31.

The wrought-iron gratings, models of which are shown in the corridor from Room 31, also occupied an important place in the architecture and decoration of the houses of the National Revival period. Various wrought-

iron constructions and ornaments such as shutter facings and hinges, door locks, door knockers, padlocks and keys were also used in the house. Usually they were decorated with sculptured images, zoomorphic ornaments and plant motifs. A collection of copies of some of these interesting accessories is also on display.

Room 30 and the large corridor leading to it are devoted to traditional folk culture. Together with the Slav letters and the Christian religion it was a shield which during the years of Ottoman rule safeguarded the national self-awareness of the Bulgarians against assimilation by the conquerors. The exhibits show typical aspects of the way of life and of the mentality of the Bulgarian during the National Revival period. They symbolize the great creativity of the Bulgarian people in their striving for beauty and cosiness, and also the success and accomplishment of the original masters of folk art in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The room gives pride of place to Bulgarian carpets, the fame of which spread far beyond the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. The carpets shown here are of high artistic quality and originate from the great carpet-producing centres of Chiprovtsi, Kotel and Piro. Kotel carpets date back to the end of the 17th century. They were made mainly from local wool and were decorated with patterns of flowers, animals and people. The geometrical style, however, was more common in later models.



Unlike Kotel carpets, which were made exclusively for private use, Chiprovtsi carpets were produced mainly for sale. Their designs were gradually perfected in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries. The stylized patterns were combined in complex compositions featuring trees and gardens with birds, flowers and fruit. The use of contrasting light and dark colours was characteristic of Chiprovtsi carpets.

In the 19th century Pirot also became a famous carpet-producing centre. Pirot carpets were similar to those manufactured in Chiprovtsi but the design was richer, more pictorial and less geometrical, the pattern composition more complex. Carpets were also produced on a smaller scale in the towns of Samokov, Koprivshtitsa, Yambol and Panagyurishtë.

The national costumes, displayed according to ethnographic origin and type — everyday, Sunday, girls', women's, men's and ritual (St Lazarus Day¹, Christmas and wedding), are of great interest. The traditions of beauty in everyday life and dress, which survived centuries of slavery, were developed and enriched with new aesthetic and artistic qualities during the National Revival period.

In the 19th century national costumes of three basic types were worn in the different geographical regions. There were two basic types of men's

¹The Saturday before Palm Sunday



87

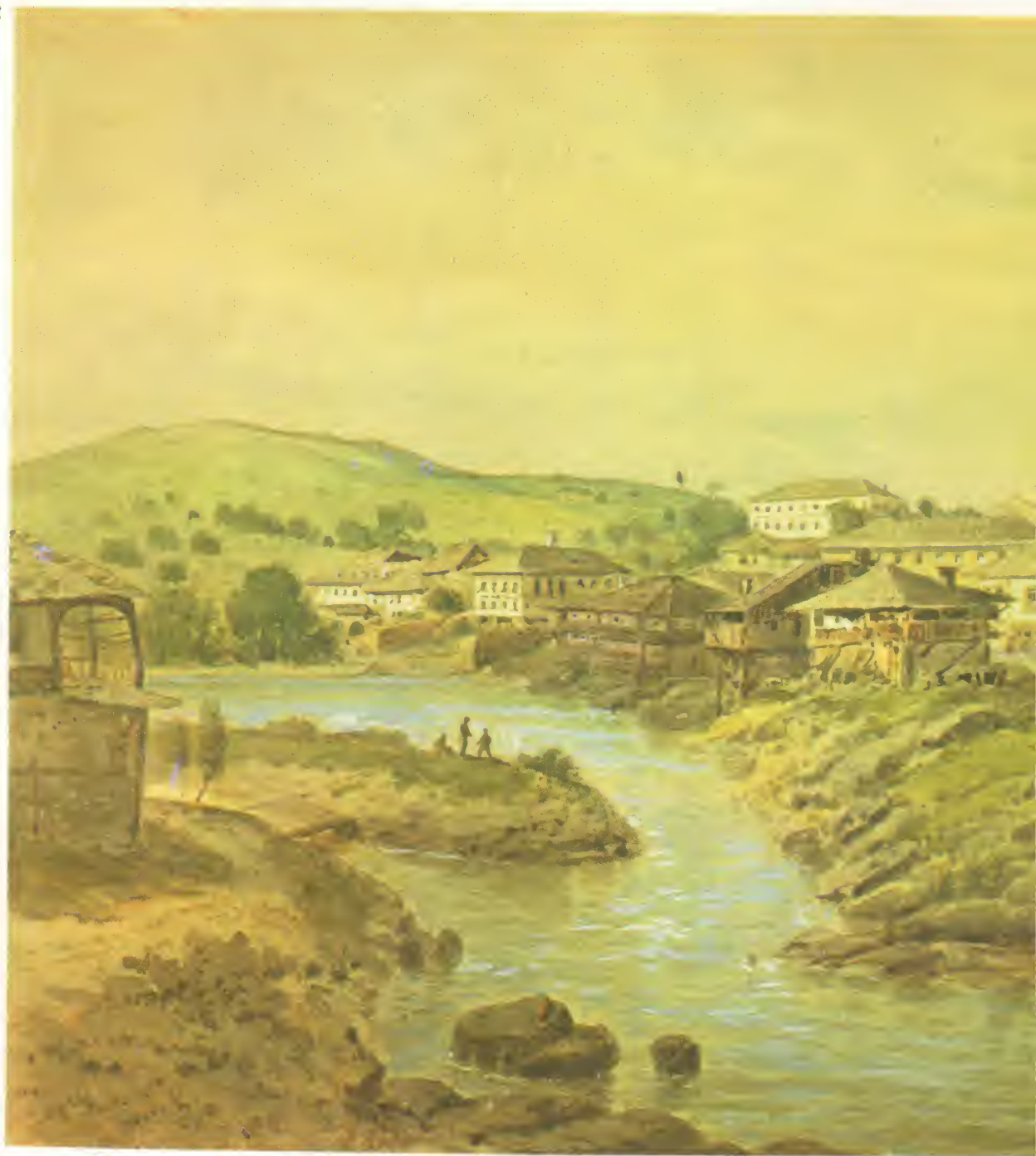
86. A money-box which belonged to a mason from the town of Kyustendil with inscription. Wood, distemper, 18 cm high

87. A silver bowl with inscription made by a craftsman from Pazardjik district, 1810, 13.5 cm in diameter

costumes called *belodreshni* (white) and *chernodreshni* (black) according to the colour of the cloth. The *belodreshni* men's costume is represented at the exhibition by a costume from the Trun region. The main features are tight, close-fitting breeches and a rather long shirt and overcoat. The *chernodreshni* costume, which towards the end of the century had become very common throughout the country, had looser breeches and a shorter shirt and overcoat. Both costumes had a waist-band and a *yamourlouk* (hooded cloak).

The exhibition shows three kinds of women's national costumes. The *dvuprestilchena* (double apron) folk costume was common throughout Northern Bulgaria. The shirt and the front and back aprons are decorated with a variety of coloured designs. The traditionally white overcoats, decorated with exquisite stylized appliques and embroidery were worn mainly on holidays and for rituals. The young girls of this region decorated their hair with cut flowers and specially made garments, while married women wore a variety of kerchiefs, a tradition, handed down from Medieval times.

The most common national costume in the 19th century was the *soukman* (sleeveless dress) type. Most of the models on display belong to this type of costume and come mainly from the regions of Sofia, Ihtiman, Dobroudja, Stara Zagora, Karnobat, Sliven, Yambol. The basic com-



88. A view of the town of Gabrovo in the middle of the 19th century. Aquarelle by Felix Kanitz, 43/24 cm

89. A restored room in the Yorgov House in the town of Teteven, 18th century

ponents of this costume are a shirt, a sleeveless overdress and an apron to which various kinds of overcoats were added.

The *saena* marks the summit in the development of the Bulgarian national costume. It consists of a shirt, a low-necked dress and a colourful apron which is the most important part of the costume. This type of costume was worn in the region of the Pirin Mountains, around the town of Kuystendil and along the lower reaches of the Maritsa.

Prior to the Liberation, European fashions were adopted only by certain circles in the urban regions and did not greatly influence the national costume. The formation of the all-Bulgarian types of national costumes







set the Bulgarians apart from the motely crowd of nationalities in the Ottoman Empire.

The originality and the beauty of the Bulgarian national costumes are to a great extent due to the embroidery. In Room 36 visitors can see a collection of embroidery patterns used to decorate shirt fronts and sleeves and skirts. Artistic embroidery was most used on the costumes from North-western Bulgaria. There it was almost the only kind of decoration, whereas in Eastern and South-eastern Bulgaria embroidery was only part of the intricate combination of embroidery, trimmings, appliqués and crochet laces.

Shown in a separate case are some very beautiful pieces of embroidery made from a pattern (90). They were used to decorate women's shirts in the area around Samokov, the village of Doupnik (near the town of Stanké Dimitrov) and to a lesser extent around Gabrovo and Trun.

More delicate and expensive ornamentation appeared towards the middle of the 19th century with the appearance of the women's town costume. Fine needlework laces, called *keneta* are a good example of this kind of ornament.

A large part of the exhibition is devoted to the goldsmith's trade. Fine gold accessories were being increasingly used to decorate national costumes. The growth of trade during the National Revival period created extremely favourable conditions for the revival of the old Bulgarian goldsmith traditions. Together with Chiprovtsi and Vratsa, Vidin, Sofia, Panagyurishtë and Koprivshtitsa also developed as important and well-known goldsmithery centres. Accessories were made mainly from silver and silver alloys and the main techniques used were forging, casting, enamelling and filigree (91). Many kinds of Bulgarian head adornments can be seen here — *tepelutsi* (small filigreed silver plates or forged ornaments which were sewn on to a small hat), hairpins, headbands, earrings and other adornments for the hair and for the kerchiefs worn by married women.

The next cases contain models of the more common styles of gold bracelets, rings, belts and belt buckles, which were richly ornamented using different techniques (92). They confirm the impression that the goldsmiths during the National Revival created works of great artistry, reflecting not only the growing aesthetic requirements but also the growing national self-awareness of the Bulgarians.

Pottery was another popular art form which prospered during the National Revival period. Specimens from most of the pottery centres — Troyan, Gabrovo, the village of Boussintsi (near Trun), Chiprovtsi, Samokov and Teteven are on display. Towards the middle of the 19th century there was already an established Bulgarian style in artistic pottery, which had its own traditional ways of shaping clay on the potter's wheel and of baking and decorating. The main types of kitchen earthenware were jugs, pitchers, dishes, pans and brandy flasks, *rukatkas* (earthenware jars with a handle across the opening), etc. as well as some ritual vessels represented by wedding jars and pitchers for holy water (93). The decoration on functional earthenware was sparing. Only earthenware, used for special occasions was decorated with engraved or moulded rosettes, flowers and images of animals and people. The exhibits prove that during the National Revival pottery preserved its purely popular nature and with its simple beauty and clarity of line became a symbol of the Bulgarian mentality.

Yet another traditional trade — that of the coppersmith is also amply represented in the museum collection. It flourished during the National Revival period. The museum has very fine examples of copperwork which come from the centres of Plovdiv, Sofia, Shoumen and Oustovo. The artistic quality of the copper vessels produced in those centres made them popular throughout the Ottoman Empire. The Bulgarian tradesmen catered to the demands of the market and produced baking dishes, ablution pitchers, wash bowls, coffee pots, dishes, jugs, ewers and cooking pots. Many oriental forms have been borrowed by the Bulgarian masters to suit local tastes. Some of the ancient traditions in the trade were revived during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Vessels made of pewter were also common during the National Revival period. The trade called *dyukmendjiistvo* or *vitlenicharstvo* because of the

distinctive screw plugs used in the vessels developed during the 18th and 19th centuries in the towns of Plovdiv, Karlovo, Sofia, Samokov, Bansko, Etropolé and Teteven. Typical pewter vessels for *rakia* called *pinta*, *ploska* and *pavour* and others are on display (94). The rich ornamentation indicates that those vessels were used for special occasions and at rituals. They were decorated with embossed images of twigs and flowers and hunting and biblical scenes. The intertwining of typically Bulgarian and foreign elements is another characteristic feature.

The ancient Bulgarian trade of blacksmithery which was revived and flourished in a number of towns during the Revival is also represented by well chosen exhibits. Tasteful wrought-iron objects decorated the Revival period houses. Wrought-iron candlesticks and *bornarniks*, examples of which are exhibited in the room were decorated with interlaced jingling pendants. The large candlesticks made for churches and monasteries were crowned by an ornament or a symmetrically branched tree. The crosses and stylized flowers and birds are elements of Christian symbolism. An-dirons, commonly called "little horses" look like ancient cult objects related to the sun and to the popular belief in the serpent, as the symbol of the home.

In Room 24 visitors can see the unique works of the National Revival icon-painters. The first signs of a new renaissance conception of the



90

90. A sleeve from the village of Doupnik (near the town of Stanké Dimitrov), 19th century, 32 cm

world appeared within the framework of traditional ecclesiastical art, in the religious paintings which supported national interests and inspired Bulgarian self-awareness to a new, higher level. The construction of the richly decorated churches and monasteries, the only Bulgarian public buildings, was financed by craftsmen and merchants and by the municipalities. This revealed the growing national self-awareness and the higher artistic taste of the people.

At the dawn of the Bulgarian National Revival in the 18th century, different groups of icon-painters appeared often belonging to one and the same large family which later developed into artistic schools. During the next century their works marked the peak in the development of ecclesiastical art. The National Revival icon-painters adhered to the old Bulgarian traditions in painting and enriched them with elements from the West European styles of Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo and Empire. They were highly intelligent and learned people who, departing from the anonymity of the Middle Ages, signed many of their works (95).

The works of the icon-painters and woodcarvers of the Tryavna School are displayed in the first half of the room. The Tryavna School (96) existed for more than a century and a half and its rich and varied works have a characteristic style. The Tryavna masters painted icons in optimistic, bright colours and lent emotion to the faces they portrayed. Frequently they included landscapes as an independent element in their icons.

Legend has it that the founders of the two largest families of icon-painters, those of Vitan and Zahari, were educated and instructed in the art of icon-painting by monks from Mount Athos. Only the first signed icons of Christ painted in 1789 by Papa Vitan, great grandson of the legendary forefather of the Vitan family and of St Nicholas painted in the same year by his brother Simeon Tsonyuv, one of the most talented representatives of the school, can be regarded as reliable sources of information. The art of the next generation, represented in the exhibition by a work by the Vitan brothers, is characterized by a greater number of Baroque iconographic elements (95). It might be interesting to note that towards the end of the National Revival period the names of women began to appear among the Tryavna icon-painters.

The bipartite icons from the church in the village of Golyamo Belovo (Pazardjik district) are most expressive. The Brousen tryptich from the 18th century is also of exceptional interest.

In their wonderful woodcuts the Tryavna masters developed complicated symmetrical compositions of various plant motifs animated by images of fabulous birds and animals. They are the authors of the iconostases in the churches of St Archangel and St George in Tryavna. Copies of parts of these iconostases are included in the exhibition.

Further down the Room are works by the Samokov masters. Hristo Dimitrov from the village of Dospei is believed to be the forefather of the Samokov school. It is said that he studied at the monasteries on Mount Athos and in Vienna. His work is represented by an impressive icon — Christ the All-Powerful — from the Karloukov Monastery and by two smaller icons Ascension Day and St Catherine. They are executed in an exquisite manner and stylistically they mark the transition from the Late Byzantine style of the Athos school to the style characteristic of National Revival icon-painting.

Another famous Samokov family of icon-painters is that of Obrazopissov. Ivan Nikolov Ikonopissov and his son Nikola Obrazopissov are the authors of unique works of art which differ in style from those of the other icon-painters. After studying at the Zograph Monastery on Mount Athos Ivan Nikolov went on working at the Rila Monastery, and the Samokov churches, and fulfilled orders for Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He also painted icons for churches in North-western Bulgaria from where the icon The Dormition of the Virgin, exhibited in the room, has been taken (97).

A rebel against the Greek bishops and Ottoman rule, a devoted patriot and slavophile, Nikola Obrazopissov introduced new artistic views and traditional folk elements into National Revival art.

The eldest son of Hristo Dimitrov — Dimiter Zograph (Dospevski), whom we know through the portrait painted by his son Stanislav Dos-

pevski, was one of the most talented masters of National Revival icon-painting. Being an exceptionally modest man he signed few of his works. He usually worked together with his brother Zahari Zograph and with his sons Nikola, Ivan, Stanislav and Zahari Dospevski, who were also famous icon-painters.

The most prominent representative of the Samokov Dospevski family is Zahari Zograph. A disciple of the famous enlightener Neofit of Rila he worked hard to establish himself as a distinguished personality and artist. He worked for the development of Bulgarian education and financially backed a number of cultural ventures. After studying with his elder brother, he quickly evolved a style of his own and his art became of national importance. In the '40s and at the beginning of the '50s Zahari Zograph worked in some of the largest Bulgarian monasteries — those of Rila, Bachkovo, Troyan and Preobrázhenié (Transfiguration), at the Great Laura on Mount Athos and in many Bulgarian churches. He died young and his dream to study art in Russia never materialized. Zahari Zograph experimented with secular easel painting. His self-portrait and the portrait of his brother's wife Hristiania Zographska reflected many of the characteristic features of icon-painting but with his constant striving towards realistic portraits he laid the foundations of a lasting trend in National Revival secular art. The central part of the hall shows some



91. Necklace, 18th-19th century, Southern Bulgaria, silver alloy, stones, 12 cm long

documents from his archives — his personal ermonia and account books.

The Samokov art of woodcarving is represented by copies of parts of the altar holy gates from the iconostases in the Rila Monastery and the Metropolitan Church in Samokov where Atanas Teladour, Peter and Georgi Dashini, and Stoicho Fandukov worked.

Another National Revival family of artists whose works are displayed in a separate case, worked in the region of the Strandja Mountain. Their art was a unique combination of Late Byzantine traditions, Baroque influence and folk-art traditions.

Toma Vishanov Molera who worked at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century was the founder of the Bansko school. In his youth he studied art in Vienna. His works are distinguished by shapes which differ from standard icon types. His realistic style is apparent both in his use of colour and in the shape of the figures and the faces. Toma Vishanov is the author of the mural paintings in the Pokrov Bogorodichen (Virgin's Canopy) Church at the St Lucas Hermitage at the Rila Monastery which he completed in 1811. The exhibition has a copy of a scene from one of the murals called *The Ordeals of the Soul* which depicts the Soul (in the form of a young girl), the Angel and the Devil who is shown as a grotesque combination of parts of different animals. Toma Vishanov also painted the icons on the iconostasis of the cemetery church in Bansko

92



which was restored in 1808. This iconostasis was the work of an unknown artist and is a superlative example of Bulgarian Revival woodcutting art. The museum has on display a copy of its central part and of the holy alter gates (98).

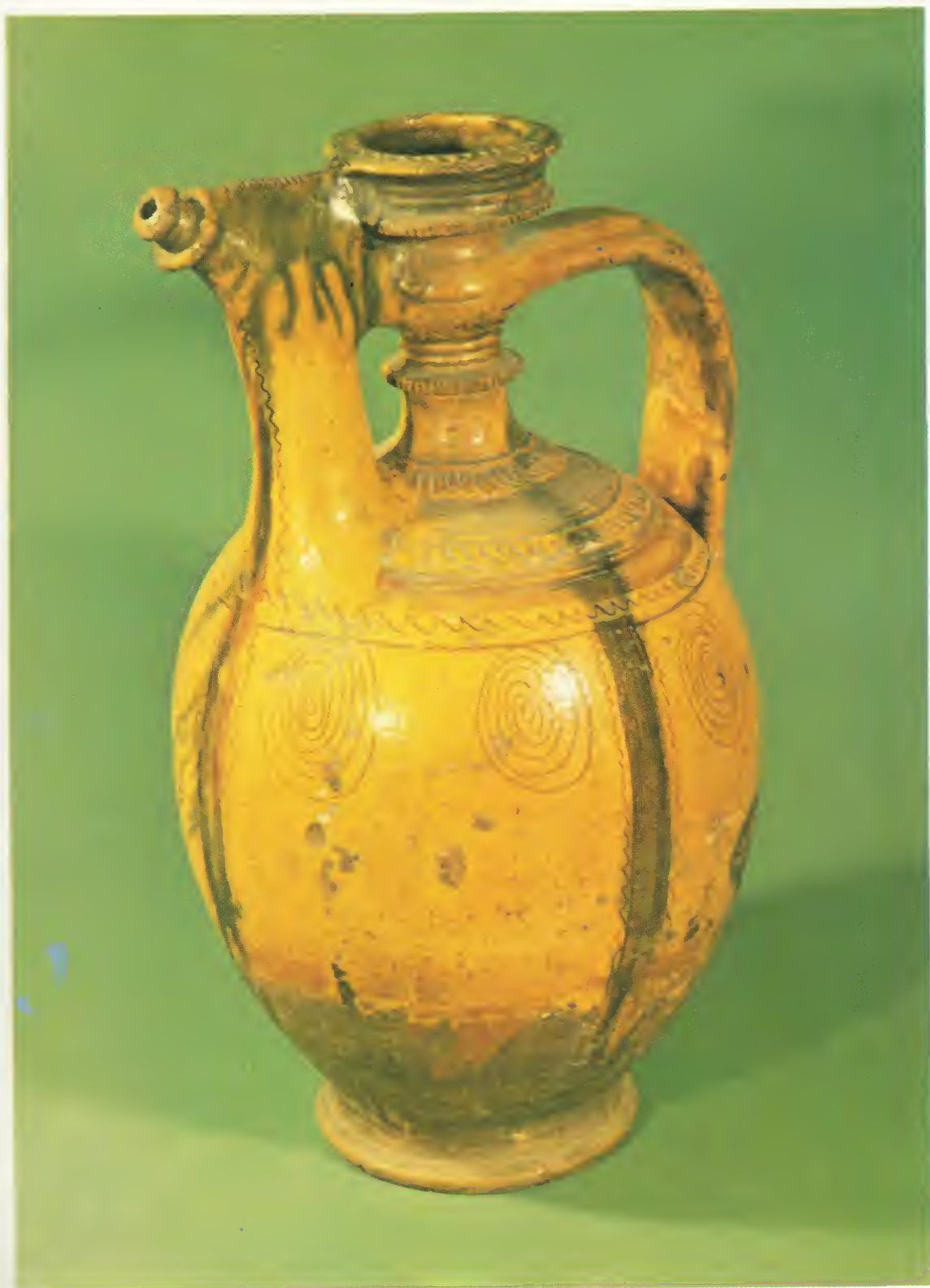
The son of Toma Vishanov, Dimiter Molerov, and his grandson Simeon Molerov adhered more closely to the then established style of the Dospevski school. They are the authors of the icons in the Holy Trinity Church in Bansko and of those in churches in Blagoevgrad district (from where the John the Baptist icon of 1841 was taken), and of mural paintings at the Rila Monastery.

92. Belt, 19th-20th century, North-eastern Bulgaria, silver alloy, gold plating, stones, 62 cm long

93. *Rakhia flask* (krondir) 19th-20th century from the town of Chiprovtsi

The works of the painters of the Debur school can be seen throughout the Balkan Peninsula. They were unrivalled woodcarvers. They built beautiful and stately churches and painted icons and murals. Dicho Zograph came from the famous family of painters from the village of Tresonché (Debur region). He worked for some 20 years near Skopje and made iconostases, pulpits and many icons in different compositional styles, using well-matched shades of colour and splendid gold ornamentation. In the 1860s Dicho Zograph worked in the churches in North-western Bulgaria. The icon Christ taken from the church in the town of Koula belongs to this period.

Many of the Bulgarian Revival churches were decorated with unique Debur woodcut diversified by intricate compositions of figures. The famous masters Peter Garka and Dimiter Stanishev worked on the iconostasis in the main church of the Rila Monastery, which was built by Pavel Yoanovich who was also a native of the Debur region. Kosta Kotsi and Kosta Passiko, who belonged to the same school carved splendid wooden iconostases in the Church of St Marina in the town of Plovdiv, and the Church of the Holy Virgin in the town of Assenovgrad. The iconostases of the St Constantine and Elena Church in Plovdiv and the Holy Virgin Cathedral Church in Pazardjik — masterpieces of the art of carving — are also the work of the Debur masters.



The icons and the copies of woodcarvings included in the collection show that towards the end of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century Tryavna, Debur, Samokov and Bansko developed as centres of traditional fine arts. In spite of the differences in the style of execution, their artists worked out the national artistic criteria and created an artistic culture of a new renaissance type.

The room dealing with Bulgarian Revival art gives prominence to secular painting. Secular painting got established in Bulgarian art as a new phenomenon characteristic of the age of the National Revival. Visitors can see self-portraits of the National Revival artists as well as their original paintings.

The icon-painter Georgi Danchov who came from the town of Chirpan turned from icon to secular painting and became one of the most interesting portrait painters of the '70s. His self-portrait also belongs to this period. Georgi Danchov was a revolutionary and an aid and friend of Vassil Levski. Exiled to Diarbekir he managed to escape when the news of the April Uprising reached him and in Odessa he painted the picture shown in the exhibition — *The Tragedy of Bulgaria*. He also made lithographs, illustrated books and textbooks and painted the portraits of Vassil Levski and Hristo Botev.

Stanislav Dospevski was the first Bulgarian to study art in Russia. His works are numerous and varied and belong both to secular and ecclesiastical art. He is one of the best portrait painters of the Bulgarian National Revival. In his numerous portraits he tried to reveal the inner force of man and, in the spirit of the Russian portrait painting school, to create true-to-life images. His devotion to Russia is apparent in his house in the town of Pazardjik where he painted a mural depicting Petersburg, a reproduction of which is shown in the corridor to the room.

A true patriot, Stanislav Dospevski maintained contacts with prominent revolutionaries. In 1876 he headed the Relief Committee for the Victims of the April Uprising and sent an address to the Constantinople Conference.

Nikolai Pavlovich from the town of Svishtov is the son of the National Revival teacher Hristaki Pavlovich. He studied at the Vienna Academy of Art and then with the financial aid of Dr Peter Beron at the Art Academy in Munich. When he returned to Bulgaria he became an advocate of realistic innovations in icon-painting and the setting up of an art school. The portraits and paintings on historic subjects, the social and publicistic activities of Pavlovich reflect the most typical changes in Bulgarian culture during the National Revival. His lithographs on patriotic subjects shown at the entrance to the room were also very popular.

The art of another noteworthy artist of the Bulgarian National Revival — Hristo Tsokev, from the town of Gabrovo — is represented by the painting *A Portrait of a Monk* (99), one of his best canvases, which was brought from Moscow where he studied. A very individual artist, he enriched Bulgarian art with one of the highest achievements of the pre-liberation age. His modest portraits are distinguished by an insight and simplicity, by a striving to portray the character and the inner world of his subjects. In the '70s Hristo Tsokev joined the revolutionary struggle of the Bulgarian emigrants. It is to be regretted that his works from that period which included a portrait of Hristo Botev have been lost.

The painting *A Girl with a Glass* by Dimiter Dobrovich from Sliven is the most striking one here. Dimiter Dobrovich studied and lived for many years in Rome. He took part in the Garibaldi Movement. A painter

94. *Buklitsa* (wine-vessel) from the town of Pazardjik led-tin alloy, 28 cm high

of exceptional talent, Dimitar Dobrovich painted in the classical style. One of his best works is his self-portrait painted with extraordinary artistic skill and profound psychological insight.

The high artistic achievements of the National Revival artists in the field of the portrait genre, the introduction of realism and the patriotic and civil commitment of National Revival art enabled it to continue to develop during the next historical period.

The New Bulgarian Education Movement

Room 25 is devoted to the pioneer movement to find a modern secular educational system to meet the growing economic and cultural needs of the population. A programme for education in Bulgarian was first prepared by Paissi, who ardently appealed to the Bulgarians to know "their race and tongue".

In the very first decades of the 19th century a new educational system was introduced in Bulgaria. The first printed texts in Bulgarian appeared in 1806. This first book was called *Kyriakodromion* or Sunday Sermon Book, but later it became known as *Sophronié* after its author's name, the great National Revival enlightener Sophroni of Vratsa.

94



95. The St Nicholas Icon by the Vitanov brothers, 1869, from the St. Nicholas Church in the village of Broussen (Sofia district), wood, distemper, 60.5/87 cm

96. Holy Virgin Eleusa icon, 1813, the Tryavna School, wood, distemper, 34/49.5 cm

Visitors can also see another national relic — the *Riben Boukvar* (Fish Primer). Its author, Dr Peter Beron, was one of the most learned Bulgarians of the 19th century. A scholar of a European standard he earned his place in Bulgarian history mainly as the author of *Boukvar s Razlichni Pooucheniya* (A Reader with Various Precepts) (100) published in Braşov in 1824, which later became known as *Riben Boukvar*, simply because on its title page there was a picture of a fish. In his small encyclopedia for children, Dr Peter Beron explains the need for education in the native language and for incorporating democratic pedagogical ideas into the Bulgarian teaching practice.

95



The first large case illustrates the first stage in the development of Bulgarian education — from the monastery schools and the Greek high schools to the first modern secular school founded on the initiative of the Odessa Bulgarian colony. Vassil Aprilov and Nikolai Palaouzov organized the collection of contributions from Bulgarian merchants and notables in Odessa and with the active support of the town the first Bulgarian reciprocal and monitorial school was opened on January 2, 1835 in Gabrovo (101). Neophyte of Rila was the first man to be appointed to teach in this school and thus the Gabrovo school was headed by one of the most prominent figures of the Bulgarian National Revival. In the case visitors can also see monitorial teaching tables — the main teaching aid of those times, which were translated by Neophyte of Rila. He also published the first Bulgarian Grammar and wrote textbooks and other teaching aids. The globe made by him for teaching geography at the Rila Monastery school has been preserved. One of the very first secular paintings by Zahari Zograf was a portrait of Neophyte of Rila.

Further on are objects and documents which belonged to prominent educationalists and cultural figures — textbooks, teaching aids, documentary photographs, newspapers and magazines which illustrate the subsequent stages in the development of the National Revival educational and cultural movement.



The first girls' school was founded by Anastassia Dimitrova in 1840 in the town of Pleven. Conscious of the highly responsible role of women in society, National Revival Bulgarians paid great attention to girls' education. With this end in view women's societies were founded in a number of National Revival centres — Lom, Stara Zagora, Turnovo and Kazanluk (from where the banner in the exhibition comes).

The first class-system schools were founded toward the end of the 1840s in Koprivshtitsa, Pazardjik, Plovdiv, Kalofer and Skopje. They taught Bulgarian, Turkish, Greek and western languages as well as natural history, physics, mathematics, Bulgarian and world history and geography, catechism and other subjects.

The first Bulgarian textbooks were written and published for the new Bulgarian schools. Neophit Bozveli (102), wrote the famous *Slavyanobolgarskoe Detevodstvo* (Slav-Bulgarian Aid for Instructing Children), A. Kipilovski published a *World History*, Hristaki Pavlovich prepared the first published edition of Paissi's history, called *Tsarstvenik*, Ivan Bogorov wrote the first Bulgarian Grammar, Naiden Gherov wrote a *Physics* textbook and K. Fotinov wrote the *Zemleopisanié* (Description of the World) textbook. The bookshop of Hristo Danov in Plovdiv sold textbooks together with teaching aids for geography, astronomy and physics, some of which are exhibited in the centre of the room.

After the Crimean War, reciprocal and monitorial schools were founded in all Bulgarian towns and in many villages. The number of class-system schools reached 50 and some of them taught agricultural and commercial subjects. A large number of schools specialized in teacher training. The towns of Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Gabrovo, Shoumen, Elena, Turnovo, Roussé, Vélés, Skopje, Toulcha and Sofia (103) developed as important school centres. The first Bulgarian secondary schools were opened in Bolgrad (Bessarabia) and in Plovdiv. The Aprilov school in Gabrovo also became a secondary school. Yosif Kovachev founded pedagogical schools in Stip and Prilep.

Prominent writers of the Bulgarian National Revival such as P. R. Slaveikov, D. Miladinov, Kouzman Shapkarov, Sava Filaretov, Krustyo Pishourka, Dobri Voinikov, Yossif Kovachev, Zaharo Krousha, Anastasia Tosheva, Yordanka Filaterova, S. N. Shoshkov, Naiden Gerov, Todor Bourmov, Zahari Knyazheski, Vassil Beron, Yoakim Grouev and Yordan Hadji Konstantinov — Dzinot worked to develop Bulgarian education. Their efforts led to a cultural revival — a spiritual revolution for people who for centuries had been oppressed and deprived of the opportunity to develop independently.

A special place in the room is allotted to the role played by foreign schools in the moulding of the young Bulgarian intelligentsia. In the beginning of the 19th century there were mainly Greek high schools but in the '30s Russian influence became dominant. Bulgarian students graduated the Odessa Secondary School and Richelieu College, the Kiev Seminary, Moscow University and the Theological Academy and the higher schools in Petersburg. A Southern Slav Boarding School headed by the Bulgarian Todor Minkov was opened in 1863 in the town of Nikolaev (Southern Russia).

Many young Bulgarians studied at the colleges of Babek and Galatasarai and at Robert College in Constantinople, at French universities and at schools and universities in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Germany.

The development of education and the successes of the Bulgarian

97. The Dormition of the Virgin icon by Yoan Iconopisssets, 19th century, Church of St George in the village of Sestrimo (Pazardjik district), wood, distemper, 58/75.5 cm

pioneers were closely linked with the development of Bulgarian literature. After the '30s pure literary works appeared as well as textbooks, and also a number of translated and abridged publications which gave Bulgarians access to the greatest works in world literature.

Civic commitment is one of the most prominent features of Bulgarian National Revival literature. One or two decades after the first attempts at writing poetry were made in the '30s and '40s, Dobri Chintoulov and Raiko Zhinzifov, P. R. Slaveikov and G. S. Rakovski wrote their patriotic poems. Grigor Purlichev won a prize in Athens for his poem *Serdaryat* (Turk "the chieftain"). Vassil Droumev was the first fiction writer, a genre which reached a peak in the works of Lyuben Karavelov. In his novels written in the critical realistic style the talented Karavelov depicted the Bulgarian mentality and way of life and advocated moral perfection and the cultural development of society.

The phenomena of the Bulgarian National Revival are really amazing. Only two or three decades after the clumsy *daskal* (teachers') verses appeared, Bulgaria gave birth to her greatest poet — Hristo Botev, the poet of the revolution and of social justice and a publicist with a keen mind and a merciless pen. The creative power of the nation which had been suppressed for centuries seemed to be concentrated in the person of Hristo Botev. Drawing from the wealth of images and symbols of national folk



art he enveloped them in the flames of his rebellious spirit and created 20 poems as a message to his contemporaries and to future generations.

The National Revival Bulgarians launched an intensive campaign for the establishment of Bulgarian as the language to be used in education and as the language of the Church, a campaign which lasted for decades. The foremost figures of the National Revival regarded the creation of a literary language as an important precondition not only for nationwide education but also for the national unification of the people. After long debates in the National Revival press the conclusion was reached that the correct solution would be to base the new literary language on the dialects. In the 1870s the works of the most prominent Bulgarian writers and publicists established a literary language based on the North-eastern dialect.

In view of the growing needs of Bulgarian society and of the new schools, the first linguistic works appeared in the 1840s. Neophit of Rila and N. Gerov compiled materials for their dictionaries and V. Aprilov and Neophit of Rila collected Bulgarian charters and folk songs. After the Crimean War new additions to Bulgarian folklore studies were the collections *Narodné Pesné Makedonska Bugara* (Folk Songs of the Macedonian Bulgarians) by S. Verkovich, *Pamyatniki Narodno Bitie Bulgar* (Records of the Bulgarian Way of Life) by L. Karavelov and *Bulgarski Narodni Pesni* (Bulgarian Folk Songs) by the Miladinov brothers.

98



Many outstanding National Revival Bulgarians took up historical research continuing the tradition set by Paissi — tracing back the roots of national self-awareness to the recent and more distant past. There were even two professional historians — Spiridon Palaouzov and Marin Drinov who were disciples of the Russian Historiographical School. A separate case displays documents related to the founding of the Bulgarian Literary Society (BLS) in 1869 in Braila which later became Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. In 1869, this society started to publish its own magazine Periodical of the BLS. Marin Drinov was the first chairman of the BLS. Another case displays issues of periodicals. In the absence of a national

98. Part of the wooden iconostasis of the cemetery church in the town of Bansko, early 19th century, 84 cm high (copy)

99. Hristo Tsokev. Portrait of a Monk from the Kiev-Pechorska Laura 1867, canvas, oil paints, 40/50 cm

state organization the press played the role of a national platform for the discussion of important national issues. They ranged from the problems faced by education and the struggles for an independent Church to the ways and means of achieving political independence.

In 1844 Konstantin Fotinov started publishing the first Bulgarian magazine called *Lyuboslovié* in Smyrna. Two years later Ivan Bogorov started the first Bulgarian newspaper called *Bulgarski Orel* (Bulgarian Eagle) in Leipzig. During the period after the Crimean War the Bulgarian press developed very quickly. During the '60s and the '70s some 100 Bulgarian newspapers and magazines were published in Constantinople and in Bulgarian emigrant centres abroad. Some editions of these are shown in the rooms of the museum which deal with the struggle for an independent Bulgarian Church and with the Bulgarian National Revolution.

A special part of the room is devoted to the *chitalishté* (community club), a unique Bulgarian cultural institution. The first community clubs founded in 1856 in the towns of Svishtov, Lom and Shoumen were soon followed by others in all areas inhabited by Bulgarians — in Bulgaria, in Constantinople and in the Bulgarian emigrant clubs abroad. A magazine called *Chitalishté* which covered many educational issues was being published in Constantinople.

With the aid of the parishes Sunday schools were organized at the



БЪЖКЪАГЪ

СЪ РАЗЛИЧНЫ

ПОЖЧЕНІА

СОБРАНИ СЪТ

ПЕТРА Х. БЕРОВИЧА

За Болгарски-тъ оучилища.

Напечата са съ съ помощь-тъ

Г. АНТОНЬОВА ІСЛАВНОВИЧА.



ВЪ ГОДѢ 1824.

100. Peter Beron, A Reader with Various Precepts, 1824, Braşov

101. Seal of the first secular reciprocal and monitorial school in the town of Gabrovo.
Diameter — 3.8 cm

community clubs as well as at libraries and reading rooms for the education of young and old. Many community club workers were members of the revolutionary organization. It was at the clubs that the Bulgarian theatre took its first steps. Orchestras and choral societies were also organized by them.

Amateur theatre companies staged plays by V. Droumev, D. Voinikov, I. Bluskov, S. Dobroplodni and L. Karavelov as well as many plays which were translated or adapted in Bulgarian. The first theatre performances were held in 1856 in the towns of Lom and Shoumen. In Bulgaria D. Voinikov organized a theatre company and Hristo Botev took part in

101



the performances. Theatre performances and lectures held at the community clubs frequently turned into occasions for ardent patriotic sermons.

An impressive part of the exhibition deals with the Day of the Slav teachers Cyril and Methodius (104), the celebration of which in the years after the Crimean War became a demonstration of the national pride and the national unity of the Bulgarian people. The images of the Salonika brothers decorated the only Bulgarian public establishments — the churches. The Bulgarian school in Bucharest was called Cyril and Methodius. The marble plaque inscribed with the names of the Bulgarians who had financed the building of the school has been preserved. Portraits of three of the donors — Metropolitan Panaret Rashev, Marin Benly and Kozma Trichkov, have also survived.

During the National Revival period the sympathy which foreign travelers felt for the Bulgarian people gradually developed into a scholarly interest. The greatest credit for the discovery of the Bulgarian language for the Russian Slav scholars goes to Yuri Venelin. His works *The Old and the New Bulgarian* and *The Birth of New Bulgarian Literature* encouraged the Bulgarians in Odessa to collect and study linguistic materials.

Professor V. I. Grigorievich from Kazan University travelled in the Bulgarian lands in 1848. In his book *Essays on a Tour of European Turkey* he shared his impressions of Bulgaria with the academic world.

Russian and western scholars were amazed at the organization of the Bulgarian schools which were supported entirely with public money, were very democratic and used progressive educational methods.

The Struggle for an Independent National Church

In Room 26 visitors will get to know that together with the struggle for cultural independence, the awakening Bulgarian nation was fighting for spiritual and national independence. Paissi of Hilendar raised the question of spiritual independence back in the 18th century. Recalling the Turnovo Patriarchate, he clearly outlined the goals of the movement against the authority of the Greek bishops.

The exhibition in this Room is comprised mainly of documentary materials. Photographs of the most important participants in the struggle for an independent Church and State accompanied by biographical data, important documents and National Revival newspapers reveal the main stages in the development of this popular national movement.

The first expression of discontent directed against the local bishops in the towns of Vratsa, Samokov, Skopje and Stara Zagora date back to the 1820s. It took only two decades for this discontent to spread throughout the whole country. During that period the Bulgarian bourgeoisie strengthened its economic position and the first successes of the Bulgarian school pioneers consolidated the feeling of national self-awareness. In 1838 a campaign to expel the local bishop was launched in the largest diocese of Turnovo. Petitions were written on behalf of all citizens to the Turkish Government demanding the appointment of a Bulgarian bishop. Gradually this movement spread throughout the country and became an important factor in its social and political development.

The Bulgarian community in Constantinople, which possessed the necessary economic and political power, became the centre of the campaign. It was headed by Neophit Bozveli, one of the leading figures of the Bulgarian Revival. He became a national leader and was the first to draw up a united national political programme. Neophit Bozveli and Ilarion Makariopolski were given special credentials and in 1844 and 1845 they presented petitions to the Sublime Porte in which they listed the Bulgarians' demands for the ordaining of Bulgarian bishops in the Bulgarian dioceses, for the building of a Bulgarian church parish in Constantinople as well as for cultural autonomy, i. e. for the official recognition of the Bulgarian nation within the framework of the Ottoman Empire. Because of his political activities Neophit Bozveli was exiled to the Monastery on Mount Athos together with Ilarion Makariopolski, where he died in 1848.

However, his cause was taken up by his followers. In 1848, with the aid of Stefan Bogoridi, permission was obtained to establish a Bulgarian Church parish in Constantinople. The Constantinople Bulgarian community founded in 1849, assumed the role of a cultural and national institution. It took upon itself the task of promoting Bulgarian schools and education. It set up a Bulgarian publishing house and in the 1850s it took over the management of the prestigious *Tsarigradski Vestnik* (Constantinople Newspaper).

The movement for spiritual and national independence broke out anew in 1856, immediately after the end of the Crimean War. It spread through-

out the Bulgarian lands and the Bulgarian emigrant centres and became a nationwide movement.

After the declaration of the new Reform Act of the Sublime Porte (the so-called *Hatti-Huayum* which is displayed in the Room) in 1856, the Bulgarians in Constantinople called for the holding of the promised elections for the appointment of Bulgarian civic and church leaders and changed their demand for replacing Greek bishops with Bulgarian ones. Instead they demanded church autonomy.

In 1857, in support of these demands the Bulgarian people sent their first representation to Constantinople which presented more than 60 petitions to the Sublime Porte. Besides Turnovo, Stara Zagora, Vratsa, Lovech, Plovdiv, Tatar-Pazardjik, Haskovo, Samokov and Shoumen, the movement had spread to Silistra, Vidin, Kyustendil, Pirot, Vranja, Edirne, Koukoush, Stip, Gorna Djoumaya, Bansko, Nevrokop, Strouga, Ohrid, Vélés, Prilep and Skopje. The whole country supported the move to expel the Greek bishops and the recognition of Ilarion Makariopolski as Head of the Bulgarian Church (105).

At the beginning of the 1860s the Bulgarian representatives in Constantinople decided to separate the Bulgarian Church from the Greek Patriarchate. At the celebration of the Divine Easter Liturgy on April 3, 1860, Ilarion Makariopolski omitted the name of the Greek Patriarch,

102

СЛАВНОБОЛГАРСКОЕ

ДѢТОВОДСТВО

3 1

МАЛЕНТЪ ДѢЦА.

Напечатано съ одобрѣніемъ и издѣлкіемъ
гдѣ Овѣтаости Князя Сербскаго
ЛИБОША ЛЕОДОРОВИЧА СЕРБОВИЧА,
на даръ оучающейся Болгарской юности:

Благословеніемъ же преосвященнѣйшаго Сербіи Митропо-
лита Господина ПЕТРА.

Собранно отъ различни списатели, и сочиненно на
шесть части, за шесть оученичій чины: первомъ
преведенно отъ еллиногреческаго діалекта, на сла-
венноболгарскаго, и изданно: отъ Небфута
Архімандрита Хилендарца, рѣдомже Кѣталица.

ЧАСТЬ ВТОРАЯ.

Содержащая извѣстія за пать тѣхъ чѣсткы. Над-
лежательства на бѣхожденіето съ рѣзніи лица, и бѣ-
вѣзательства. Бѣсѣди бѣсны. Правѣчителніи по-
вѣсты. Четѣрите нѣждны наѣки всѣкомѣ. Пать
тѣхъ поѣзы на чѣловѣчеството: и дѣлжносты-
те на всѣкаа фаміліа.

ВЪ КРАГЪВЦѢ,

Оу Княжеско - Сербской Типографіи 1835.

ВЪ КРАГЪВЦѢ, 1835. К4 ДЕНО

thereby rejecting the authority of the Patriarchate in Constantinople.

After the Easter incident riots broke out in Skopje, Ohrid, Vélés, Koukoush and Varna and in the Southern Thracian and Black Sea towns. Thus the Church and the national independence movement clearly outlined the ethnical borders of the Bulgarian nation.

In 1861 the rebel bishops Ilarion Makariopolski, Avksenti Veleshki and Paissi of Plovdiv, who were persecuted and exiled appealed to the Bulgarian people to continue their just struggle against the Patriarchate in Constantinople. Copies of these addresses are on display.

The issue about the Bulgarian Church was one of the main problems in Turkish politics and occupied an important place in the activities of European diplomacy. While Russia adhered to the old thesis of the unity of Eastern Orthodoxy, the Catholic West, and especially France, tried to take advantage of the situation to increase their influence in the Balkans.

In 1854-1856 a Bulgarian group referred to as Uniates was set up in Constantinople. It was headed by Dragan Tsankov who, supported by Catholic propaganda, started the publication of the *Bulgaria* newspaper as the official publication of the movement of the uniates. On December 18, 1860 about 120 Bulgarians signed the Unia — an Act which placed them under the spiritual authority of the Roman Catholic Church and Uniat communities were founded in some towns. Even at that time a large number of the pro-Western members of the movement for an independent Church regarded the Uniate movement as an efficient instrument for exerting pressure on the Russian policy for the speedy resolution of the Bulgarian Church question.

In the course of the campaign different groups had formed in the Church Movement. The most powerful and the most influential one was the Group for National Action headed by Ilarion Makariopolski and Dr Stoyan Chomakov. It defended the Bulgarian interests to the full and enjoyed the support of the parishes and of revolutionaries such as Rakovski.

The most prominent members of the pro-Russian group, which allowed for certain compromises with the Patriarchate in the resolution of the Bulgarian Church Question, were Todor Bourmov and Naiden Gerov. In his newspapers *Gaida* (Bagpipe) and *Macedonia* P. R. Slaveikov gave wide coverage to the great struggle of the people and advocated the idea of an independent Bulgarian Church.

Another group centred around Gavril Krustevich, the Tupchileshtovi brothers, Ivancho Hadji Penchovich and the editor of the *Tourtsia* (Turkey) newspaper N. Genovich. This group also declared itself for an independent Bulgarian Church but insisted on the struggle being conducted through moderate and legal means which would compel the Sublime Porte to grant the wishes of the "loyal" Bulgarian population.

However, it was not peaceful means that brought the struggle to a successful conclusion. Towards the end of the 1860s Bulgarian armed groups in the Balkan added their support to the mass movement against the Constantinople Patriarchate and the Sublime Porte yielded finally to the Bulgarians' demands. On February 27, 1870 the Sultan issued a firman (Royal Decree) for the establishment of an independent Bulgarian Exarchate. A large panel in the room is dedicated to the establishment of the first independent Bulgarian institution. It features enlarged photographs of H. Dembitski's famous black-and-white drawing *The Battle near Verbovka* (led by the armed group of Filip Totyu) and of the firman. Above these photographs are written the moving words of Hristo Botev — "the

103. School bell from the school of St Iliya in the town of Teteven. Early 19th century, 26 cm high

sacred blood of our martyrs solved the Church Question”.

Article 10 of the firman defined the boundaries of the Exarchate which included 15 dioceses: Roussé, Silistra, Shoumen, Turnovo, Sofia, Vratsa, Lovech, Vidin, Nis, Pirot, Kyustendil, Samokov, Vélés, Varna, (but not the town of Varna and the villages between Varna and Kyustendja), Sliven district (without Anhialo and Mesemvria), the Sozopol district (but excluding the villages along the coast) and the Plovdiv diocese (but not the town of Plovdiv, Stanimaka and some villages). The spiritual life in all these districts, two-thirds of which gave their consent, was placed under the authority of the Bulgarian Exarchate. In 1874, after referendums in the regions of Skopje and Ohrid, Bulgarian bishops were ordained in these two dioceses, in compliance with the wishes of the population.

On the wall opposite the panel is a large photograph of the Bulgarian People's Church Council convened in 1871 in Constantinople. This council accepted the Statutes of the Exarchate and laid down the basic principles of the organization of the Bulgarian Church — council management and election of the main Church bodies. The Metropolitan of Vidin, Antim I, was elected as the first Bulgarian Exarch in 1872. The most interesting object in the case containing the Church vestments which symbolized the Prelate's authority is the sceptre of Exarch Antim I (106).

The corridor leading to the National Liberation Movement room con-



tains exhibits connected with the Russo-Turkish wars and the role they played in the history of the Bulgarian people. The objects and photographs of contemporary engravings, show that the Russo-Turkish wars at the turn of the century shook the Ottoman Empire and strengthened the Bulgarian faith in Russia as their natural ally and deliverer. Selflessly the Bulgarians went to the aid of the advancing Russian armies. They formed groups of armed volunteers which took part in the battles.

The first Bulgarian political centre, the Secret Society headed by Sophroni of Vratsa, was founded at the beginning of the 19th century in Bucharest. During the 1806-1812 war, the Secret Society established an organization of revolutionary-minded compatriots to help the Russian Army. Thus the first Bulgarian military unit was born. In 1811 the numerous volunteer detachments were joined together to form the "Bulgarian Countrymen's Army" whose seal has been reconstructed from an imprint and included in the museum's collection (107). Sophroni of Vratsa set forth the Bulgarians' political demands in a Petition to the Russian Headquarters and in 1812 he wrote his Address to the Bulgarian People in which he stressed the need for active cooperation with the Russian Army.

A secret network was set up in North-western Bulgaria to help Russian military intelligence, for which General Turchaninov sent a letter of thanks to the people of Vratsa. Facsimiles of letters to Hadji Tosho Tsenov and Dimitraki Hadji Toshev, important men in Vratsa, show that they corresponded with Russian officers and their commanders during the war as well as with the leaders of the Serbian uprising which broke out in 1804. The population in the western Bulgarian lands actively supported the struggle of the neighbouring Slav peoples. They organized uprisings and Bulgarian freedom-fighter groups were formed in the Serbian Revolutionary Army.

The Bulgarians took an even more active part in the Greek Liberation Movement of 1821-1827. They organized an uprising in Bulgaria and Bulgarian volunteers joined Greek detachments. Some of them distinguished themselves as commanders and were declared national heroes of Greece.

In support of the Greek Revolution of 1828, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The Russian Army marched victoriously to Edrine under the command of General Dibich Zabalkanski. Many Bulgarian volunteers took part in this war. The Bulgarian detachment organized under the leadership of Captain Georgi Mamarchev distinguished itself in the battle to take the Silistra fortress. Bulgarian uprisings in the regions of Bourgas and Strandja made the Dibich campaign easier. All this gave Bulgarian representatives the right to put the question of an independent Bulgarian state to the Russian command.

National Revolutionary Movement

Room 27 traces the Bulgarian people's struggle for national liberation (108). The Room is divided into smaller interconnecting rooms each of which is devoted to a particular stage in the growth of the national liberation movement and the people's courageous struggle for freedom.

The first exhibits are the blown-up portraits of the great ideologists and leaders of the national revolution — Georgi S. Rakovski, Vassil Levski, Lyuben Karavelov and Hristo Botev. The objects and documents in the room prove that the echo from the 1828-1829 uprising had not died away. During the next decades a great number of revolts and uprisings broke out which in spite of the courage shown by the Bulgarians were unsuccessful. The aim of the first of these uprisings, organized by the commandant of the Silistra Fortress, Georgi Mamarchev, was to provoke Russian military intervention in support of the Bulgarian demands. A secret conspiracy known as *Velchova Zavera* (the conspiracy of Velcho and named after its leader) was set up in Turnovo and the surrounding region. But the conspiracy was betrayed, its leaders arrested and executed and the planned uprising was thwarted.

The peasant uprisings in North-western Bulgaria in 1835, 1836, 1837



104. The Cyril and Methodius icon by Stanislav Dospevski, 1860, from the Church of the Holy Virgin in the town of Pazardjik, wood, distemper, 97/155 cm

and 1841 were drawn in blood. A large but poorly armed revolutionary army was formed in the region around Nis but it was soon destroyed. Bands of Bashi-bazouks and arnauts plundered and burned 240 villages.

These events led to repercussions in the Wallachian lands. In the years 1841-1843 secret organizations were set up in Braila whose aim was to send large revolutionary groups, organized and financed by the Bulgarian immigrants, to Bulgaria. But the three attempts to do so failed. One of the leaders of the so-called Braila Revolts was the 20-year old "patriarch" of the Bulgarian Revolution — Georgi S. Rakovski.

Spurred on by the merciless exploitation and by the revolutionary winds which blew across Europe in 1848 and 1849 the north-western Bulgarians once again rose in revolt against their oppressors. At the beginning of 1850 an extensive revolutionary organization was set up in Vidin, Belogradchik, Lom and Nis. The uprising, in spite of its size and good organization, was mercilessly suppressed. More than 3,000 people were killed and the Bulgarian population of Belogradchik was massacred. The story of the ten-day blockade of the powerful Turkish stronghold of Belogradchik, headed by Ivan Koulin whose sword is on display in the exhibition was passed down from generation to generation.

A prominent place in the room is given to the materials and documents describing the participation of Bulgarian volunteers in the Crimean War. When the war broke out in 1853 the hope that liberation was once again imminent was reborn in the hearts of the Bulgarian people. A Secret Society headed by Georgi S. Rakovski was set up in Constantinople. It maintained contacts with the commander-in-chief of the Danubian Army, Field-Marshal Paskevich-Erivanski. A facsimile of his Address to the Bulgarian People is displayed.

The Bulgarian settlements in Romania and Russia were also aroused. At the beginning of 1854 the Bucharest Church Warden's organization, which was later renamed as the *Virtuous Society* and published the *Otechestvo* newspaper, and the Odessa Bulgarian Leadership emerged as the political centres. Their immediate tasks were to enlist volunteers for the war with Turkey and to place Bulgarians at the disposal of the Russian command. Thanks to the efforts of the leaders of these organizations and of Dr Ivan Selimski, appointed by the Russian Headquarters as the chief coordinator in the recruitment of volunteers more than 4,000 Bulgarians enlisted in the ranks of the Russian Army. The Bucharest and Odessa revolutionaries organized an extensive intelligence network in Bulgaria which included prominent cultural and public figures.

During the war several attempts at uprisings were made: in Turnovo under the command of Captain Nikola Filipovski and in Vidin (known as the Dimitrakiev Revolt). Some of the Bulgarian volunteers remained in Russia after the war as regular soldiers in the Russian Army or as students at Russian schools.

In the years after the Crimean War, Georgi Stoikov Rakovski (1821-1867), a brilliant ideologist and organizer, became the first leader of the National Revolution. The museum collection contains some photographs and documents written by him as well as most of his famous books and newspapers. Ardent revolutionary and politician, poet and publicist, ethnographer and historian, an inspired and selfless patriot, this talented man drew strength from the spirit of the nation. He fought against the Greek bishops, wrote about the history of his people (*Some Speeches about Assen I*) and the haidout (the outlaw freedom-fighters') movement (*Forest Traveller, The Bulgarian Haidouts*) and took part in the debates on the Bulgarian literary language. In his newspapers *Dounavski Lebed* (Danubian Swan), *Boudoushtnost* (Futurity) and *Branitel* (Guardian) and in his magazine *Bulgarska Starina* (Bulgarian Antiquity) he covered all the vital issues of Bulgarian society. But his greatest contribution was as an ideologist of the National Liberation. A dedicated revolutionary and democrat, he developed the idea of the organization of a national uprising directed by a unified centre, and drew up his famous plans for the liberation of Bulgaria, the first of which dates back to 1858. The exhibition includes his Plan for the Liberation of Bulgaria of 1861. This plan envisaged the establishment of a regiment of 1,000 men who would advance along the ridge of the Balkan Mountains to the old Bulgarian capital of Veliko

Turnovo where they would proclaim the liberation of Bulgaria. The uprising was to be directed by Temporary Bulgarian Leadership functioning as a Provisional Revolutionary Government. Rakovski drew up the statutes for this government in 1862. In the same year he set up the First Bulgarian Legion in Belgrade — the main body of the future revolutionary government. The young Bulgarians who trained in the legion distinguished themselves in the battle against the Turkish garrison of the Belogradchik Fortress on June 15, 1862. More than 600 young Bulgarians were trained at this military and revolutionary school.

In the following years Rakovski launched an active political campaign in the Balkan countries but after some bitter disappointments he came to the conclusion that in order to liberate themselves the Bulgarian people should rely on their own forces. In January 1867, in his last published document Provisional Laws for the People's Mountain Freedom-Fighter Groups for 1867, which can also be seen in the exhibition, he set guidelines for the formation of a united national army of freedom fighters, headed by a Supreme People's Secret Bulgarian Command as an independent body of the Bulgarian National Liberation Movement, free of any foreign influence. Rakovski's belief in the self-reliance and independence of the liberation movement was his legacy to the younger revolutionaries. At the age of 46, this great revolutionary died as an emigrant. His articles and



105. Metropolitan mitre, 19th century, 24 cm high

books, his newspapers and his plans, and, the most valuable relics — his personal weapons — remained. Some of these are on display (109).

At the beginning of the 1860s, the idea of forming a freedom-fighters' movement in the mountains as part of the tactics of the liberation struggle received wide support. The exhibition includes materials related to this movement. Ideologically and politically inspired by Rakovski, the idea of mountain freedom-fighters was also supported by other political figures and organizations.

In 1867 a revolutionary committee headed by Lyuben Karavelov was founded in Belgrade to support the struggle for liberation by sending armed groups from Serbian territory. In the same year, the Virtuous Society equipped the armed groups of Panayot Hitov and Filip Totyu whose aim was to raise Bulgarian morale in view of the impending joint anti-Turkish activities planned by the Bulgarians and the Serbians under the protection of Russia. Other armed groups were also formed and they later joined the Second Bulgarian Legion. It was founded in the autumn of 1867 in Belgrade as the result of an agreement between the Virtuous Society and the Serbian Government to establish a Bulgarian Military School to train men for the planned Bulgarian uprising. But this joint Bulgaro-Serbian operation was never realized because the Serbo-Turkish conflict was settled by political means.

In the following year most of the legionaries joined the freedom-fighter groups of Hadji Dimiter and Stefan Karadja. They were organized by the Bulgarian society which succeeded the Secret Central Bulgarian Committee (SCBC) which was founded in 1866 when joint Bulgarian-Romanian operations were being planned. Financially aided by the Odessa Leadership and oriented towards the West, the SCBC established committees in Romanian towns and in the countryside. The *Narodnost* (Nationality) newspaper published by the SCBC which supported the ideas of bourgeois liberalism is on display. The committee members wavered about the political aims of the Liberation Movement. At one moment they advocated a dual Turkish-Bulgarian state and at another revolutionary propaganda and armed conflict.

On July 6, 1868, 127 Bulgarians landed on the Bulgarian bank of the Danube and started out on the difficult road to immortality. Led by Hadji Dimiter and Stefan Karadja the freedom fighters engaged in hard battles near the Turnovo villages of Karaisen, Petrené and Vishograd, where the voivode Stefan Karadja was killed. Hadji Dimiter died in the last battle on Bouzloudja Peak. The standard of the Stefan Karadja band and the swords of the two voivodes are on display. There is also a copy of the Proclamation of the Temporary Balkan Mountains Government spread by the freedom fighters on their way.

The tragic end of the largest Bulgarian freedom-fighter group meant that the National Liberation now needed new political tactics and that work had to begin on systematic preparations of a revolution from inside the country. This new stage in the development of the National Liberation Movement is closely linked with the name of the great son of the Bulgarian people — Vassil Levski.

After training with the two Bulgarian Legions and after being the standard bearer of the Panayot Hitov freedom-fighter group, Levski made a reassessment of the role of freedom-fighter groups and looked for new ways of launching the revolutionary struggle. From December 1868 to March 1869 he made his first tour of Bulgaria with the support of the Bulgarian Society. During his second tour from May to August 1868 he laid the foundations of an internal organization of local revolutionary committees. Towards the end of 1869 Levski joined the circle of revolutionaries in Bucharest which gathered around the editorial office of Karavelov's *Svoboda* (Freedom) newspaper. As one of the founders of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee (BRCC), with first-hand experience acquired during his tours of the country he supported the opinion that only the foundation of a network of revolutionary committees could bring about a successful national uprising.

On May 26, 1870, Levski returned to Bulgaria and continued to work to form a revolutionary network. The internal revolutionary organization was strengthened and the committee in Lovech was declared Bulgaria's

106. The sceptre of the first Bulgarian Exarch Antim I, silver, gold-plating, 164 cm long

BRCC. It was also known as Temporary Government.

After founding a powerful and vital organization, which became a binding force in the Liberation Movement, in 1871 Levski prepared an ideological and political programme known as "Instruction to the Workers for the Liberation of Bulgaria". In it he listed the basic principles of the forthcoming revolution. Believing in the "natural power" of the people, Levski rejected political cooperation with outside forces and advocated an independent Bulgarian revolution. He stressed that this revolution should be the work of the people. The membership of the revolutionary committees which included representatives from all social strata was an



106

expression of this view. Revolutionary terror was exercised against the *chorbadjis*¹ and funds were collected to buy arms for the people. In his *Instructions* Levski clearly emphasized the aim of the organization — "to introduce radical changes in the present despotic and tyrannical system and to replace it with a republic (people's rule) by means of a nationwide revolution..." "Everywhere where there are Bulgarians", the Apostle wrote, "there will be a sacred and pure republic" in which "Bulgarians, Turks and Jews, etc. will live in harmony, fraternity and full equality and will be ruled by laws made by themselves".

At the end of 1871 and at the beginning of 1872 draft copies were sent to all local committees. Thus Levski established himself not only as a strategist and organizer but also as an ideologist of the Bulgarian National Revolution. A copy of his *Instructions* is on display next to some items used by the apostle in his conspiratory activities — a small printing press and false seals of red wax. There is also the apostle's personal dagger, which was preserved by the heirs of one of his concealers at the Sopot Monastery, Nun Evgenia (110).

¹Rich money-changers, rich merchants and money lenders, big landowners and suppliers of the Turkish Army. The source of their income was merciless exploitation.

As the internal organization of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Movement grew in strength two main centres were formed — an internal centre, headed by Vassil Levski and the Bucharest centre, headed by Lyuben Karavelov.

The next collection in the museum deals with the political and revolutionary activities of Lyuben Karavelov. He grew as a public figure under the influence of Russian revolutionary democratic thought and progressive European philosophy. His revolutionary activities in Serbia brought him close to the Serbian *Omladina* and he advocated the idea of a South-Slav Federation and a union between Bulgaria and Serbia. Lyuben Karavelov established himself as one of the most talented publicists and writers of his time. The collection contains newspapers and revolutionary pamphlets published by him as well as a copy of the manuscript of his novel *Is Fate to Blame*.

On November 7, 1869 Lyuben Karavelov started the revolutionary newspaper *Svoboda* (Freedom), which became the official publication of the BRCC. In August 1870, the newspaper published the first programme of the BRCC and Lyuben Karavelov made a detailed analysis of its ideas in a pamphlet entitled *Bulgarski Glas* (Bulgarian Voice). His conclusion was that freedom could be won only if the people relied on themselves and “sacrificed themselves and dedicated... all they had and all they could



to winning the freedom of the Fatherland". The new state would be founded "according to the best laws of enlightened peoples..."

Materials relating to the work of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee (BRCC) are also displayed. The Statutes which the BRCC adopted at the General Assembly held from April 29 to May 1872 are there. They empowered Levski to represent the BRCC in Bulgaria and declared him "The Chief Apostle of All Bulgaria, Thrace and Macedonia". Returning to Bulgaria, Levski set about rebuilding the committee organization. District centres were founded in 1872. Intensive work was carried out to collect funds for arms and equipment for the population and

107. Seal of the Bulgarian Countrymen's Army, diameter 4 cm

108. View of Room 27 — The National Liberation Struggle of the Bulgarian People

hundreds of new members took the revolutionary oath, whose symbols are also included in the collection. The committee network spread over the whole country and worked on the immediate preparations for an uprising. Documentary photographs show the most famous of the thousands of Bulgarians who were members of this internal revolutionary organization and who dedicated their lives to the cause of the revolution.

The arrest and the execution of the Apostle after the disclosures made by Dimiter Obshti before the Turkish court caused a crisis in the organization. Many of the local revolutionary committees broke up. The leaders of the BRCC tried to reunite the revolutionary forces by convening a General Assembly in 1873 and in 1874, the protocols of which are shown in the exhibition. For the first time Hristo Botev became a member of the BRCC at the Assembly in August 1874. He rapidly established himself as a leader. Botev emerged as an ideologist of the National Revolution and as an utopian socialist influenced by the Russian revolutionary democrats, the French socialist utopians and the Bulgarian revolutionary school represented by Vassil Levski. As an emigrant in Romania he developed his talent as an ardent champion and leader of the revolution and his genius as a poet and publicist. Through his newspaper *Duma na Bulgarskite Emigranti* issued in 1871 in Braila he advocated a "peoples's revolution" and a "radical change" which he called "triumphal gates for all peoples



and especially for ours who have no present, no past and only a future and a bright future because together with the Slavs they have still something to give to the world and to mankind". Botev regarded the Bulgarian revolution as a part of the common struggle of all peoples for social justice. In 1871 he warmly supported the Paris Commune and wrote his great *Symbol of the Creed of the Bulgarian Commune*.

Because of a lack of funds he had to stop the publication of his newspaper and began to write for Karavelov's *Svoboda* and *Nezavisimost* (Independence). He also published a few numbers of two new newspapers *Boudilnik* (Wakener) and *Tupan* (Timbal) in cooperation with the Polish revolutionary and artist Henrrik Dembitzki. At the end of 1874, when Karavelov withdrew from active political work, Botev started publishing the newspaper *Znamé* (Banner) as a publication of the BRCC. In it the great poet published his rejection of the ideas of the enlightenment and called for a "revolution, an immediate and desperate people's revolution" to be the work of internal revolutionary forces. He saw the solution of all the problems of the Balkan peoples in the founding of a Balkan Federation, rejected capitalism and advocated that the development and preservation of the democratic elements in the life of the people could lead to socialism. He looked to the natural revolutionary instinct of the Bulgarians to bring about a fundamental change in Bulgarian society and



set the BRCC on a course leading towards an armed uprising.

The next theme of the exhibition is the 1875 Uprising which is known as the Stara Zagora Uprising. A contemporary engraving shows the revolt which broke out in Bosnia and Hercegovina in the summer of 1875 and added to the growing crisis in the Ottoman Empire. The Bulgarian revolutionaries also adopted the idea for an uprising. A General Assembly of the BRCC was convened on August 12, 1875 which elected a new central committee with Hristo Botev as chairman and voted for a nation-wide uprising. Filip Totyu, and Panayot Hitov set about forming emigrant freedom-fighter groups. Funds were collected for arms and Nikola Obreshkov, Panayot Volov and Stefan Stambolov were sent to Eastern and Central Bulgaria to organize the Uprising. Combat units which included Stoyan Zaimov and Georgi Benkovski were formed to spark off riots in the Ottoman capital. A Proclamation by the Thousands of Rebels in the Balkan Mountains was issued for propaganda purposes. It is displayed next to the weapons and equipment of the rebels.

But only in the district of Stara Zagora were adequate preparations made. A standard for the uprising was sewn there and a freedom-fighter group was formed which, however, failed to join with the village groups to mount an attack on the town, the strategy decided on in the preliminary plan. The Zhekov brothers died a heroic death during the group's advance **109**



109. Georgi S. Rakovski's gun

to the Balkan Mountains. More than 700 people were arrested in the town and the leaders of the revolt, including the chairman of the revolutionary committee, Kolyo Ganchev, were tried and hung.

About the same time two other freedom-fighter groups were formed in the village of Chervena Voda (Roussé district), headed by Vurban Yordanov and Toma Kurdjiev and in Shoumen, headed by Atanas Voivode and they, too, acted in isolation. Thus because of insufficient preparation the uprising did not become a nationwide revolutionary operation. Its failure caused a crisis in the BRCC, Botev handed in his resignation and the committee fell apart.

Room 28 covers the most memorable event in the centuries of struggle by the Bulgarian people against their oppressors — the 1876 April Uprising. The first exhibits are materials related to the setting-up of the Gyurgev revolutionary committee in the autumn of 1875. The young revolutionaries attached to it decided to declare a nationwide uprising in the spring of 1876. To make preparations easier the country was divided into four revolutionary districts. Stefan Stambolov was appointed as chief organizer (apostle) of the first, Turnovo district, and Hristo Karaminkov-Bounito and Georgi Izmirliiev-the Macedonian were appointed as his aids. The second district was that of Sliven and its apostle was Ilarion Dragostinov aided by Georgi Obretenov and Stoil Voivode. The third district was Vratsa with apostle Stoyan Zaimov aided by Nikola Obretenov and Nikola Slavkov and fourth came the Plovdiv district with apostle Panayot Volov aided by Georgi Benkovski and later also by Georgi Ikonomov and Zahari Stoyanov. As preparations were being made the town of Panagyurishtë became the centre of the fourth district and its apostle became Georgi Benkovski. The display shows not only pictures of these heroes of the national uprising but also their personal belongings — weapons, personal seals and equipment.

The Gyurgev Committee gave the apostles the task of restoring the network of local committees set up by Vassil Levski and of organizing armed groups of freedom-fighters among the emigrants to support the uprising. Special attention was paid to the military and technical preparations and to the arming of the population. According to the preliminary plan the action was to be concentrated in the mountain regions with the aim of forming free revolutionary zones in the mountains of Stara Planina (Balkan Mountains), Sredna Gora and the Rhodopes.

Towards the end of 1875 and at the beginning of 1876 the apostles arrived in Bulgaria and started work in their regions. Preparations were most energetic in the first and fourth revolutionary districts. The revolutionary committees sought ways to supply the population with munitions, bullets were cast in special moulds, swords were forged and uniforms and standards made. Many of these national relics are shown in the exhibition. A special case contains rebel equipment and weapons made from original materials of the time, as described in Zahari Stoyanov's book *Notes on the Bulgarian Uprisings*. Writing about the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Bulgarian people in the spring of 1876 he gave a list of the main items which each of the rebels had to possess — "a uniform, a hooded cloak, weapons, dried bread (in the form of biscuits) and even poison, just in case..." The specially made *kalpatsi* (fur hats) bearing the image of the Bulgarian lion and the sacred words "Freedom or Death" are also included. Cannons were made from cherry trees. There were also cannonballs. Raina Popgeorgieva, a teacher from Panagyurishtë, made the revolutionary standard and Tsveta and Ivan Zografski made smaller stan-

110. Vassil Levski's dagger



dards for the individual freedom-fighter groups. The exhibition includes standard No 3 (111) of the Hwurkovata Cheta (cavalry group).

On April 14 a General Assembly of representatives from the revolutionary committees of the Fourth Revolutionary District was convened in Oborishté. This first Bulgarian people's assembly chose the town of Panagyurishté as the centre of the uprising and put Georgi Benkovski in charge of revolutionary activities throughout the country. It was decided that an uprising would be declared on May 1.

Betrayed and threatened with arrest, the Koprivshitsa revolutionary committee declared a state of insurrection on April 20. Todor Kableshev sent the famous *Bloody Letter* to the revolutionary centre in Panagyurishté and on April 20 a decision was taken to declare a state of insurrection in the whole revolutionary district. A Provisional Government was set up in Panagyurishté as the body of revolutionary rule. A Proclamation issued to the Bulgarian people read: "The day of the National Uprising of all Bulgarians in Bulgaria, Thrace and Macedonia has come. Today, on behalf of our people we declare before the civilized world: Complete Freedom or Death!"

Klissoura and Strelcha followed suit. The villages along the Topolnitsa River formed a revolutionary camp on Eledjik Peak in the western part of the Sredna Gora Mountains. Benkovski organized his legendary *Hwurkovata Cheta*. In the Rhodopes the rebels of Bratsigovo, Peroushtitsa and Batak struggled heroically and selflessly in the most tragic events in the history of the Uprising.

On April 25, the *Bloody Letter* sent from Panagyurishté reached the centre of the First Revolutionary District — the town of Gorna Oryahovitsa — and Stefan Stambolov gave the signal to revolt (112). An armed group headed by Voivode Priest Hariton was formed by the inhabitants of the Turnovo villages who fought courageously against the ten-thousand strong Turkish Army in the Dryanovo Monastery. Tsanko Dyustabanov led an armed group of 200 men from the town of Gabrovo. Together with the rebels from the villages of Kruvenik, Batoshevo and Novo Selo they fought hard against the enemy. A group of 120 men was formed from the town of Tryavna and the surrounding area. It was led by the Voivodes Todor Kirkov, Hristo Patrev, Stanyo Gudev and its standard was made by the Tryavna revolutionary and icon-painter Tsanyu Zahariev.

In the Sliven region, where preparations had been less intensive only one group of 60 men headed by Georgi Drazhev was formed. It also included revolutionaries from the town of Yambol.

Stoyan Zaimov's attempt to declare a state of revolt in Vratsa on May 11 failed.

The emigrant revolutionaries in Romania organized two armed groups to aid the rebels. The first was headed by Hristo Botev and the second and smaller one was headed by Tanyo Stoyanov. The latter group crossed the Danube near the town of Toutrakan at the same time as Botev's armed group, in order to distract the attention of the enemy.

On May 16, 200 young Bulgarian revolutionaries captured the Austrian river boat *Radetski* and landed near the town of Kozlodouï. On their way to the Vratsa Mountains they fought many difficult battles. In the battle near Milin Kamuk the standard bearer Nikola Simov-Kourouto was killed. His dagger is in the exhibition. The main body of the group succeeded in breaking through the Turkish cordon and withdrew towards Veslets Peak. On May 20 the voivode Hristo Botev was killed in action. The Botev rebels dispersed in small groups but were killed or captured by the Turkish pursuing parties.

For more than a month the rebellious Bulgarian people fought bravely against the regular Turkish Army and the bands of bashi-bazouks and Circassins. More than 30,000 men, women and children were massacred, more than 80 towns and villages were burned to the ground and more than 200 were plundered. During the uprising the Bulgarian people produced a pleiad of national heroes whose names fill the hearts of the Bulgarians with patriotic pride.

Although the April Uprising did not end in success, it played an important role in the historic fate of the Bulgarian people. It showed to the

world the heroism and martyrdom of a nation which had launched a desperate struggle for survival against its centuries-old oppressor. The April Uprising resulted in a powerful international movement being formed in defence of the Bulgarian people. This movement is the topic of the display in the corridor to Room 28.

Through the Englishmen Edwin Pears and Dr. Albert Long, and the American Dr. C. Washburn information about the events in Bulgaria began to appear in the European press. At the insistence of the Russian Foreign Ministry, an international enquiry was organized. Prince Tsere-telev and Y. Skailer revealed horrifying facts. Special credit for revealing



112. The standard of the Gorna Oryahovitsa rebels

the truth about the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria went to the *Daily News* correspondent J. A. MacGahon. Protest rallies were organized in England, France, Italy and outstanding politicians and writers such as Victor Hugo, William Gladstone and Garibaldi supported the Bulgarian cause. Lady Emily Strangford set up hospitals and carried out relief work in the regions which had suffered.

In Russia the wave of indignation took on enormous dimensions. Tolstoy, Tourgenev, Dostoyevski, Garshin, Nemirovich-Danchenko, Mendeleev, Makovski and Verashcagin were deeply shocked by what the Bulgarian people had suffered. "In Russia no one wants to think about



anything, no one wants to listen about anything, no one wants to speak about anything and no one wants to read about anything but the events across the Danube", the *Otechestvennyé Zapiski* magazine wrote in September 1876.

A wide and active campaign in support of the fraternal Slav people began in Russia which to a great extent determined the policy of the Russian Government and the events of 1877.

The Liberation of Bulgaria

Room 29 contains a collection of materials, objects and documents from the Russo-Turkish War of Liberation and the revolutionary activities of the Bulgarian people in 1876-1877.

After the repression of the April Uprising, the Eastern crisis reached a new stage. The Bulgarian people had been defeated but they had not lost their hope and determination. Hundreds of petitions asking for help were sent to the Russian Emperor. In June 1876, the emigrant revolutionaries organized a Central Charity Society (CCS) which took over the leadership of the national revolution expecting imminent help from Russia. It organized the recruiting of volunteers for the Serbo-Turkish War. In



the summer of the same year 2,500 Bulgarians in three detachments took part in the battles against the Turkish Army.

The leaders of the CCS strived to take part in all international initiatives related to the Bulgarian Question. They sent a memorandum to the Great Powers and drew up plans for the establishment of an independent Bulgarian state. But the attempts by the Great Powers to resolve the Bulgarian Question at the Ambassadors' Conference at Constantinople and later in London failed (113).

This made an armed confrontation inevitable and although not well-prepared Russia mobilized and on April 12/24, 1877 the Manifest declaring war on Turkey was announced. It is displayed in a separate case. Romania, Montenegro and later Serbia took part in this war as Russia's allies.

At the beginning of 1877 the CCS, with the support of the Russian authorities in the town of Kishinev formed three volunteer battalions which after the declaration of war were reformed into the Bulgarian Volunteer Force under the command of General Stoletov. The Samara Flag under which the Bulgarians bravely fought in the summer of 1877 near Stara Zagora and the Shipka Pass became the symbol of the military prestige of the Bulgarian volunteers.

The Room contains many materials which reveal the heroic exploits of the Bulgarian volunteers — rows of orders and medals among which

113



113. The map of Bulgaria drawn up at the Constantinople Conference

are the crosses of St. George and St. Anna as well as jubilee silver prize cups, weapons and the personal belongings of the Bulgarian volunteers.

The most important stages in the progress of the military campaign of 1877 and 1878, which amazed contemporaries with its military and tactical successes and with the incredible heroism and tenacity of the Russian soldiers, are the crossing of the Danube, the battles near Stara Zagora and Shipka Pass, the attack and siege of the town of Plevna, the winter march across the Balkan Mountains and the Shipka-Sheinovo battles. In the room these stages are illustrated by contemporary engravings. As the result of incredible effort and an indomitable fighting spirit the Russian Army reached the suburbs of Constantinople in eight months. A special case contains the weapons and the uniform of a Russian officer and the campaign compasses of General Gurko.

The Bulgarian people welcomed the news of the declaration of war with indescribable enthusiasm. The CCS distributed a Proclamation for Armed Struggle, the original of which is shown in the exhibition. Numerous detachments were set up to carry out intelligence activities and to take part in military operations. The armed groups of the voivodes Panayot Hitov and Dyado Zhelyo, of Ilyo Markov and Tseko Petkov and of Simo Lazarov operated in the mountain ranges near Trun. The armed group of Petko Kiriakov operated in the Rhodopes and the Gyumyurdjin region. The Bulgarian population rendered active assistance to the Russian Army by supplying it with provisions, by clearing a way for it through the Balkan Mountains and by providing first aid. Especially active in this field was Archimandrite Magarii, the Abbot of the Troyan Monastery and a revolutionary from the times of Levski.

With the triumphant ending of the war and with the signing of the San Stefano Treaty on February 19 (March 3), 1878 the Bulgarian state was restored. After five centuries Bulgaria once again began to live an independent political life.

The end wall of Room 29 shows the precious painting *The Defence of Orlovo Gnezdo* painting which is dear to the heart of every Bulgarian. Above the painting is a quotation from Todor Zhivkov: "The Liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman domination was a great event in the history of our people. It opened a new age in the social, economic and political development of the country."



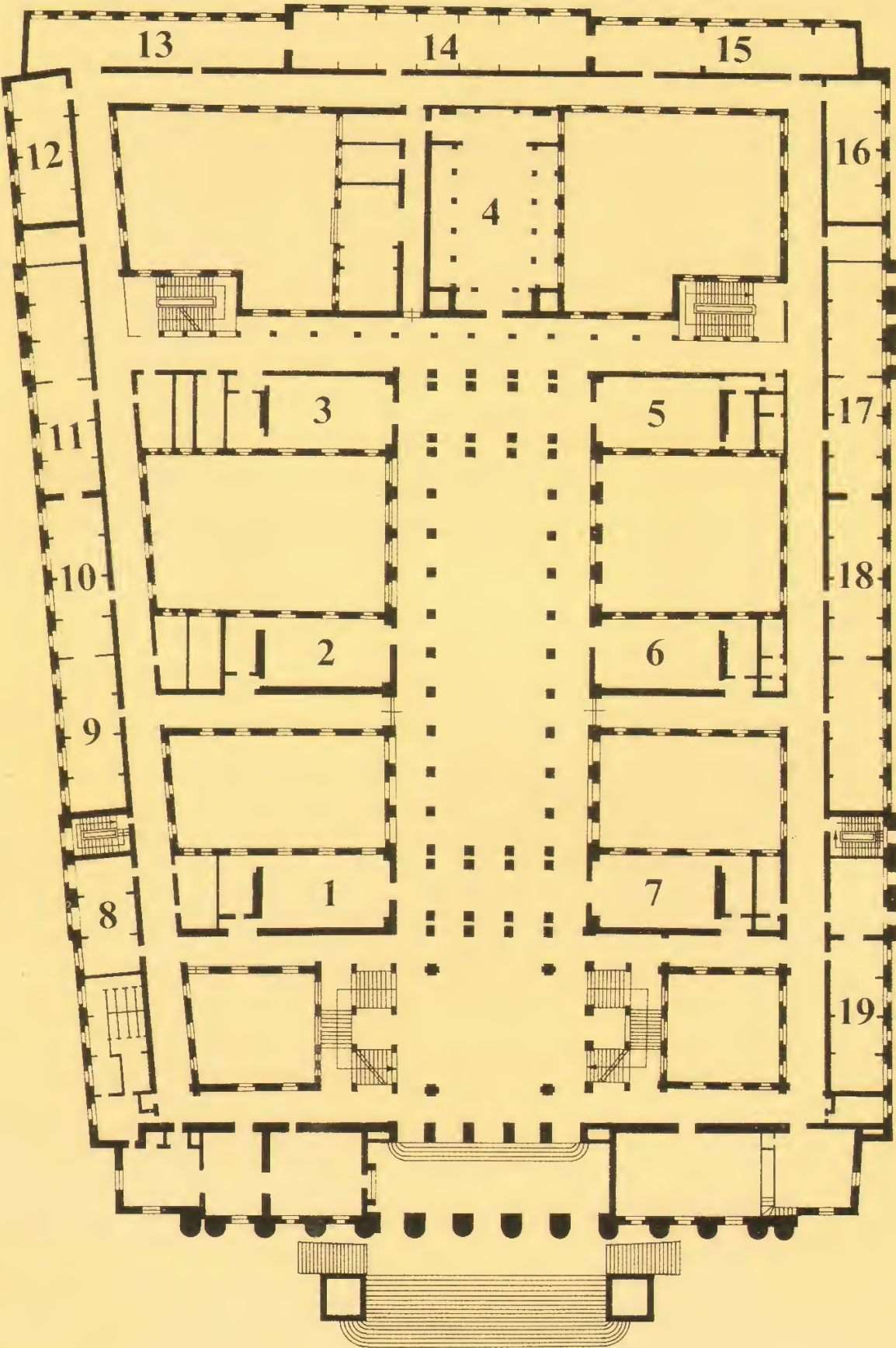
Contents

The Bulgarian Lands in Ancient Times	15
The Prehistoric Age	40
Ancient Thrace	44
Medieval Bulgarian State	73
First Bulgarian State (7th-11th century)	94
Second Bulgarian State (12th-14th century)	112
The Bulgarian Lands during the 15th-17th Century	123
National Resistance	125
Cultural Centres	133
Bulgarian National Revival	151
Economic and Cultural Development	152
The New Bulgarian Education Movement	173
The Struggle for an Independent National Church	182
National Revolutionary Movement	186
The Liberation of Bulgaria	201





First floor



Central hall

1

The Chalcolithic Necropolis in Varna

2

The Vulchitrun Gold Treasure

3

The Panagyuristhé Gold Treasure

4

The Spiritual World of the Thracians

5

Bulgarian Medieval Art (7th-12th century)

6

Bulgarian Medieval Literature

7

Bulgarian Medieval Art (13th-14th century)

8

Museum collections

PREHISTORIC AGE

9

The First Settlers in the Bulgarian Lands

The First Farmers and Stockbreeders

10

The Origin of Metallurgy

11

The Spiritual World of the Ancient Farmers and Stockbreeders

ANCIENT THRACE

11

Formation of the Ancient Thracian Tribal Community

12

Formation of the Ancient Thracian Tribal Community

13

The Thracians during the 1st millennium BC

14

The State of the Thracians

15

Moesia and Thrace — Roman Provinces

16

Economy

17

Religion and Art. Late Antiquity

MEDIEVAL BULGARIAN STATE

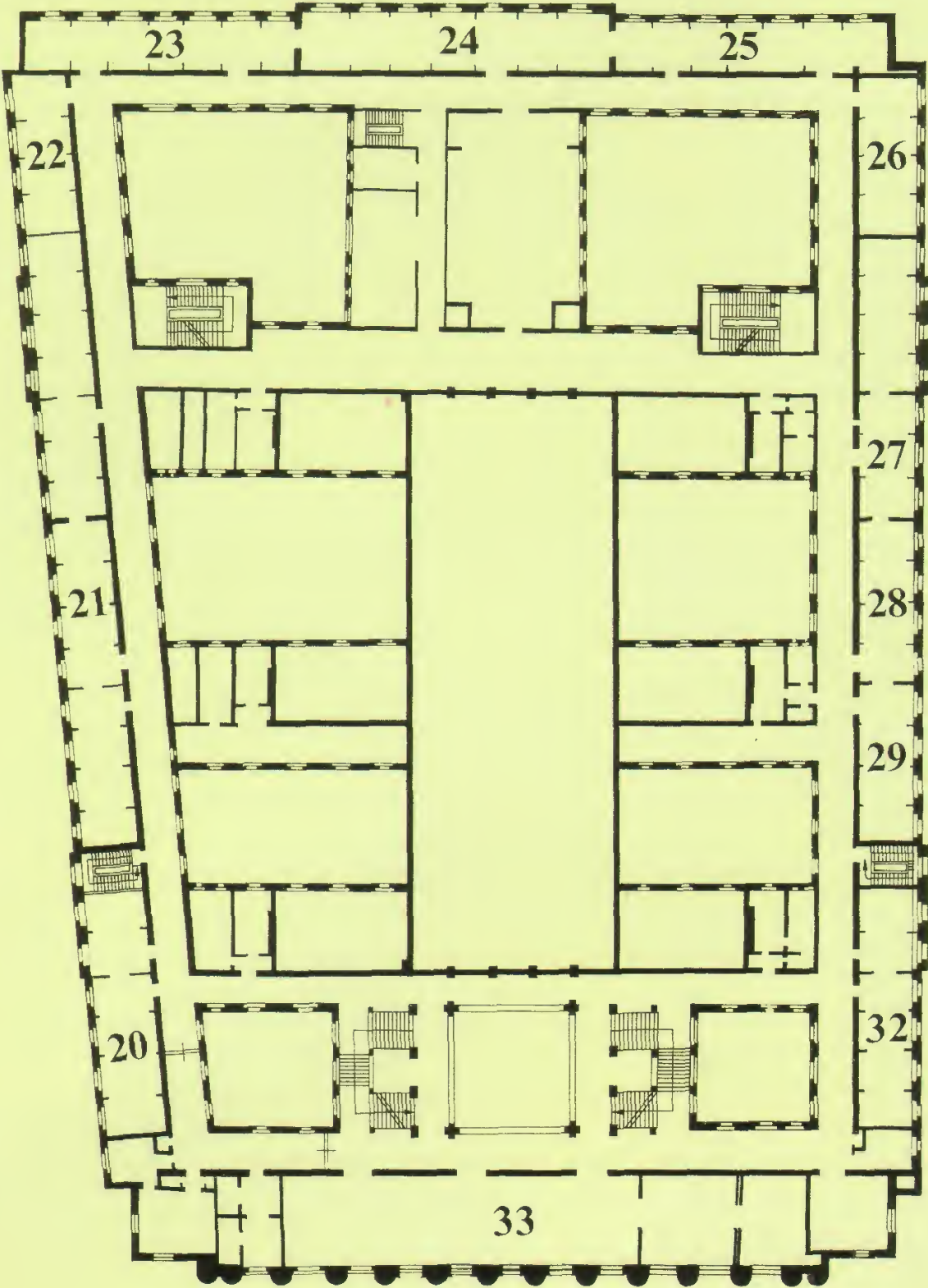
18

The First Bulgarian State (7th-11th century)

19

The Second Bulgarian State (12th-14th century)

Second floor



THE BULGARIAN LANDS DURING THE 15th-17th CENTURY

20

Struggles of the Bulgarian People

21

Cultural Centres

22

The Rila Monastery

BULGARIAN NATIONAL REVIVAL

23

The Beginnings of the Bulgarian National Revival

23

Economic Development

24

National Revival Period Art

25

National Revival Period Education and Culture

26

Struggle for an Independent National Church

27

National Liberation Movement

28

The April Uprising

29

The War of Liberation

30

Ethnographic Exposition

31

Ethnographic Exposition

32

Documents from the State Archives

33

Temporary Expositions



SVYAT